

**TOWARDS A THEORY OF PEDAGOGY, LEARNING
AND KNOWLEDGE IN AN 'EVERYDAY' CONTEXT:
A CASE STUDY OF A SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE
UNION**

By Linda Helen Cooper

Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**In the School of Education
Graduate School of Humanities
University of Cape Town**

**Supervisors:
Professor Crain Soudien
and Dr Jonathan Grossman**

August 2005

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

UT 370 001

792488

Declaration

I declare that *Towards a theory of pedagogy, learning and knowledge in an 'everyday' context: a case study of a South African trade union* is my own work, except where indicated, and that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university.

Signed

Signed by candidate	Signature Removed
---------------------	-------------------

Linda Cooper

August 2005

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to document and theorise processes of learning and forms of pedagogy and knowledge in the trade union organisational context. It seeks to establish how these vary across sites within the union and in the context of broader historical changes in trade unions' social and political role. The thesis also aims to contribute to the development of a conceptual approach that will allow processes and forms of learning, pedagogy and knowledge in informal or non-formal, collective, social-action contexts such as the trade union to be compared with those in specialised education domains.

The study adopts a critical, interpretive, qualitative case study methodology, and is based on a single case of the Cape Town branch of the South African Municipal Workers' Union. Research was carried out in three organisational settings: the union's organised education programmes, sites of everyday organisational involvement, and the occasion of a national strike of the union. Data was gathered through two cycles of field work: the first cycle relied on ethnographic observation; in the second cycle, data was gathered through in-depth, individual and focus group interviews with shop-stewards. Observations afforded insights into patterns of interaction and participation indicative of pedagogy, knowledge and learning. Interviews gave insight into workers' changing experiences of education and learning, and allowed participants' views on the emerging analysis to be gauged.

Evidence from the case study is presented and analysed, drawing on the classificatory power of Bernstein's sociology of education; the sensitivity to context of the Situated Learning and Activity theorists; the dialectical logic of Vygotsky; and Bakhtin's notion of dialogicality and the 'everyday' as simultaneously an alienated and potentially liberated state.

A central finding is the strong, ideological directedness of union pedagogy that expresses itself across different sites not only in visible, performance modes of pedagogy but also in invisible, competence forms of pedagogy. In contrast to the assumptions normally made about radical pedagogy, union pedagogy is a 'mixed pallet' where a radical, competence pedagogy has been inserted into a more dominant performance model of pedagogy. However, the hierarchical relations normally associated with performance pedagogy are moderated by other key

elements of union pedagogy: the distributed and shared nature of the educator role; the extensive use of oral-performative tools of mediation that are embedded in the culture and history of participants of this activity system, which enable them to contribute to the form and content of the pedagogic message; and the hybrid forms of knowledge which allow participants to articulate their own experiential knowledge in a dialectical way with knowledge derived from more formal sources of epistemological authority. The ways in which these features of pedagogy are enacted is influenced by internal relations of power within the organisation.

The 'directedness' of union pedagogy is linked to its counter-hegemonic social purpose. Despite its espoused goal of social transformation, union pedagogy is in practice an ambivalent combination of resistance, transformative vision and accommodation, and in certain contexts it reproduces some of the key lines of social inequality which it aspires to transform.

The thesis concludes by proposing an analytical model involving the combination and extension of existing theories of pedagogy and knowledge. This model is intended to facilitate a dialogue between research across different education domains in a way that acknowledges pedagogic and epistemological difference and diversity in a non-elitist way.

Table of contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Acronyms used</i>	<i>xii</i>
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
Worker education in South Africa, and the ‘learning history’ of this researcher	3
History poses educational questions	7
Historical change poses new questions	8
An intellectual journey through the literature on worker education	10
Historical studies of worker education	11
Workers’ education, ideology and class consciousness	13
Critical pedagogy and popular education	16
Learning and knowledge in social movements	18
The ‘learning organisation’ and ‘knowledge society’	20
Returning to the research questions	22
A brief introduction to the case study	24
Organisation of the thesis	27
A note on racial terminology	28
CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	29
Introduction	29
The ‘hard boundary’ approach to the sociology of knowledge	30
A South African ‘hard boundary’ approach to knowledge	30
Durkheim: Knowledge ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’	33
Basil Bernstein: ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ discourses	34
Relevance of Durkheim and Bernstein for this study	37
The ‘no-boundary’ or ‘multiple boundary’ approaches to the sociology of knowledge	41
Experiential learning theories	41
Learning in ‘communities of practice’	44
Relevance of the Situated Learning perspective to the trade union context	49
A dialectical approach to the relationship between formal and informal knowledge	52

Vygotskian perspectives	53
Post-Vygotskian perspectives	55
<i>Scribner: Knowledge 'at work'</i>	56
<i>Engeström: 'Breakthrough into learning activity'</i>	57
Usefulness of Vygotskian/post-Vygotskian framework for this study	59
Bakhtin: viewing 'everyday' knowledge as a site of resistance, subversion and a source of 'utopian impulse'	60
<i>Applying a Bakhtinian perspective to workers' knowledge and learning</i>	65
Conclusions: a conceptual framework	67
<i>Knowledge</i>	68
<i>Learning</i>	69
<i>Pedagogy</i>	69
 CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN	 70
Broad methodological approach	70
Critical, interpretive research	70
Constructivism, structuralism and materialism	71
Research design	72
Choice of a case study approach	72
Rationale for case selection	73
Data collection	75
Planning the fieldwork	75
<i>What kinds of data?</i>	75
<i>Where to find this data?</i>	76
<i>How to collect this data?</i>	78
First cycle of fieldwork: observation	79
<i>Negotiating access</i>	79
<i>Participation or observation?</i>	80
<i>Selecting sites for observation</i>	81
<i>Recording of observations</i>	82
Second round of fieldwork: in-depth and focus group interviews	83
<i>Interviews aimed mainly at testing the validity of my preliminary analysis</i>	83
<i>Interviews aimed mainly at data collection</i>	84
<i>Making use of archival interviews</i>	86
Analysis and interpretation	86
Preliminary analysis	86
Computer coding	87
Key questions which guided the analysis	88

1. <i>Forms of Pedagogy</i>	89
2. <i>Educator and Learner Roles and Relationships</i>	89
3. <i>Symbolic Tools of Mediation</i>	89
4. <i>Knowledge</i>	90
5. <i>Social purpose of pedagogy</i>	90
Developing a analytical model	90
Presentation of data and analysis	91
Questions of validity	93
1. <i>Claims that data or field records produced are true to what occurred</i>	94
2. <i>Claims that the analysis was conducted correctly</i>	95
Questions of generalisability	97
The ethics and ‘politics’ of this research	98
Limitations of the study	99
 CHAPTER 4: ‘LABOUR’S SCHOOLS’: UNION EDUCATION PROGRAMMES	 101
Introduction	101
Union education in historical context	101
Observations of union pedagogy in process	104
Education programme 1: Foundation shop-steward training (FSST)	104
<i>Background</i>	104
Education programme 2: Collective bargaining workshop	108
<i>Background</i>	108
Education Programme 3: BEC debate on ‘the ultra-left’	110
Analysis of pedagogy in union education programmes	111
Educator and learner roles	112
Forms of pedagogy	116
<i>Visible and invisible pedagogy</i>	116
<i>Directive Pedagogy: shaping roles, identities and values</i>	120
Symbolic tools of mediation	123
<i>Written text and orality</i>	123
<i>A pedagogic speech genre</i>	126
<i>‘Embodied’ performance</i>	128
Knowledge in union education programmes	130
A diversity of knowledge forms	130
‘Weaving together’ different forms of knowledge	131
The social purpose of union education programmes	133
Challenging hegemonic power relations	133
Reflecting and reproducing dominant power relations	134

Concluding comments	136
 CHAPTER 5: 'SCHOOLS OF LABOUR': INFORMAL LEARNING THROUGH ORGANISATIONAL INVOLVEMENT	 140
Introduction	140
Personal reflections of learning through organisational involvement	141
Experience, action, learning and organisational involvement	142
Legitimate peripheral participation and mentoring	144
'Being thrown in at the deep end'	144
Self-study	145
Participation in meetings	145
Observations of pedagogy in process in union meetings	146
1. Branch-level meetings	147
2: Depot-level meetings	151
Analysis of pedagogy in union meetings	154
Forms of pedagogy in union meetings	154
<i>Learning through participation</i>	154
<i>Peer mentoring</i>	155
Division of labour: A 'widely dispersed' educator role	157
Symbolic tools of mediation	160
<i>Language, humour and emotion</i>	160
<i>The role of written text</i>	164
Knowledge in union meetings	169
Workers experience: a key knowledge resource	169
Weaving of knowledge: a form of 'praxis'	171
Building collective intellectual capacity	172
The union as a learning organisation: challenging, reflecting or reproducing hegemonic power?	174
Challenging hegemonic power	174
Reflecting unequal power relations	175
Reflecting dominant ideologies	177
Concluding comments	180
 CHAPTER 6: 'MASS ACTION TEACHES': LEARNING, PEDAGOGY AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE STRIKE	 183
Introduction	183
Educative impact of mass action historically	183
The union's 2002 strike	187

A national overview of the strike	187
The strike in Cape Town	189
The strike as ‘organisational learning’	198
Forms of pedagogy	198
<i>A ‘special’ community of practice</i>	198
<i>Critical reflection-in-action</i>	199
Knowledge and mass action	199
<i>Drawing on historical experience</i>	199
<i>Learning about power</i>	201
<i>A thirst for new knowledge</i>	202
<i>Imagining alternatives</i>	202
The strike as an evaluative moment of union pedagogy	203
The strike as ‘public education’	205
Educator and learner roles: workers as collective educators	206
Tools of mediation: from orality to visual spectacle	207
<i>Mass action as symbol</i>	207
<i>The strike as ‘carnival’</i>	208
<i>The role of ‘anger’ in the strike: ‘Ek sal vir jou wys!’ (I’ll show you!)</i>	209
Forms of knowledge: ‘knowing in action’	211
Social purpose of the strike: challenging societal power relations?	212
Brief review of key pedagogic features of the strike	216
 CHAPTER 7: THEORISING EDUCATION, LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE TRADE UNION CONTEXT	 219
Forms of pedagogy: a mixed ‘pedagogic pallet’	220
A trade union community of practice: learning through guided participation	221
Learning from critical reflection on experience?	224
A mixed ‘pedagogic pallet’: competency pedagogy inserted into performance pedagogy	226
A “richly diverse field of essential actors”: the dispersed trade union educator role	231
Culturally-embedded tools of mediation: oral performativity	233
Orality and performance as tools of mediation	233
Written text as a tool of mediation	240
Hybridity and ‘weaving’ of knowledge in union pedagogy	242
Hybridity, tools of mediation and forms of pedagogy	245
Crossing knowledge boundaries: pragmatic or subversive?	246
Social purpose of union pedagogy: transformation or accomodation?	247

CHAPTER 8: TOWARDS AN ANALYTICAL MODEL OF PEDAGOGY, LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE IN 'EVERYDAY' CONTEXTS	251
Developing a model	251
Using the model to summarise the thesis' findings	256
Broader significance of the findings	257
REFERENCES	260
APPENDICES	274
Appendix 1: Diagram of branch structures	274
Appendix 2: Letter to General Secretary requesting access	275
Appendix 3: Events observed	277
Appendix 4: Research report to Cape Town branch of SAMWU	279
Appendix 5: Interviews	286
Appendix 6: Interview schedule	287
Appendix 7: 'Archival' interviews	289
Appendix 8: Programme of foundation shop steward training	290
Appendix 9: Activity 3a – Why join a union?	293
Appendix 10: Programme of collective bargaining workshop	296

Acknowledgements

There are many people who advised and supported me during my work on this thesis. I am extremely grateful to Crain Soudien and Jonathan Grossman for their dedication and hard work in supervising this thesis. Crain insisted that I could do more with this thesis than I thought I could do; Jonathan showed me that good scholarship must be grounded in honesty and integrity, and his political insights guided my conceptual understandings. I thank my good friends and colleagues who took the time to read my work, give critical feedback and gave ongoing support and encouragement: Debbie Budlender, Brenda Cooper, Jeanne Gamble, Heather Jacklin, Judy Harris, Janice McMillan, Moragh Paxton and Lucia Thesen. I am also grateful to Carolyn Butler and Tim James for their proofreading and layout of the thesis respectively.

The generosity and open-mindedness of SAMWU workers and staff made this thesis possible. I am particularly grateful to Lance, Elena, Archie, Bozo, Milly and Michael for their valuable time, their insight and experience. Sandra van Niekerk facilitated my access to many branch events, and together with Sheri Hamilton from DITSELA, gave me some hope that this research might ultimately be of some benefit to trade union educators. It is hard to know how to thank John Mawbey – my life partner, intellectual partner and comrade – for his critical comment based on a lifetime of understanding and experience of trade unionism, and for his personal support.

I thank Lauren and Amy for their daughterly love and constant encouragement, and for allowing me to complete my PhD before they did theirs.

This thesis is dedicated to the many workers who have taught me so much throughout my working life.

Acronyms used

ABET	Adult basic education and training.
AEC	Anti-Eviction Campaign
AGM	Annual general meeting
ALP	Adult Learning Project
ANC	African National Congress
APF	Anti-Privatisation Forum
BEC	Branch executive committee
BPC	Black People's Convention
CCCS	Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies
CEC	Central executive committee
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CTM	Cape Town Metro
CTMWA	Cape Town Municipal Workers' Association
CUSA	Council of Unions of South Africa
DA	Democratic Alliance
DITSELA	Development Institute for the Training, Support and Education of Labour
FEDUSA	Federation of Democratic Unions of South Africa
FGI	Focus group interview
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
FSST	Foundation shop-steward training
FTSS	Full-time shop-stewards
GEAR	Growth, employment and redistribution
IAS	Industrial Aid Society
IIE	Institute for Industrial Education
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILRIG	International Labour Resource and Information Group
IMATU	Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union
LERC	Labour and Economic Research Centre
MOF	Metro organising forum
NACTU	National Council of Trade Unions
NBO	National bargaining officer

NEC	National executive committee
NEDLAC	National Economic, Development and Labour Council
NEPAD	New economic policy for Africa development
NQF	National qualifications framework
OBs	Officer bearers
PEO	Provincial education officer
RDP	Reconstruction and development programme
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SACP	South African Community Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SALGBC	South African Local Government Bargaining Council
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers' Union
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDF	Skills development facilitator
SETA	Sector education and training authority
SPM	South Peninsula municipality
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
UTP	Urban Training Project
WIP	Work in Progress
WITS	Witwatersrand
WPWAB	Western Province Workers' Advice Bureau
WSP	Workplace skills plan
WTO	World Trade Organisation
YCW	Young Christian Workers

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Historically, the trade union movement in South Africa has played a significant role as a site of adult education and learning. During the 1970s and 1980s when the black trade union movement was rebuilt, workers learnt how to organise under conditions of severe repression and developed principles and practices of workers' control and participatory democracy. As organised workers gained a sense of their own capacity to effect social change, they began to articulate a collective vision of an alternative society. With the establishment of organised trade union education programmes, the trade union movement began to articulate an approach to education and perspectives on knowledge that were to have considerable impact on the broader, popular movement against apartheid education (Kallaway, 2002: 21-22).

The trade union movement has enriched our understandings of what 'radical pedagogy' can be. However the significance of this contribution has tended to lie mainly in trade union education's political *intent*. We know very little about the actual practices of pedagogy, the processes of learning, and the forms of knowledge that are acquired and transmitted in this context. Some valuable studies of the history of trade union education in South Africa exist (discussed later in this chapter), but none attempt to theorise the forms of pedagogic practice and assumptions about knowledge that underpin trade union education in a way that can 'speak' to educational researchers and practitioners in other, more conventional sites of teaching and learning such as schools, workplaces, colleges or universities.

Since the transition to democracy in South Africa, the trade union movement has shifted its political role and this has impacted on its policies on education. Before South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, the major trade union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), entered into an alliance with the African National Congress (ANC) government and has subsequently played a key role in many areas of policy-making, including education and training. Its policies on education have shifted from being primarily concerned with effecting radical social change, to being increasingly concerned

with economic development and job creation. Very little has been systematically documented of how the trade union movement's new discourses around workplace training as well as the union movement's broader political shifts have impacted on its own, internal educational practices.

This thesis aims to document and theorise processes of learning and forms of pedagogy and knowledge in the trade union organisational context; it seeks to explore how these vary across sites within the union, and in the context of broader historical changes in trade unions' social and political role. In doing so, the thesis also aims to contribute to the development of a conceptual framework that will allow processes and forms of learning, pedagogy and knowledge in the informal or non-formal¹, collective, social-action context of the trade union to be compared with those in more mainstream educational institutions and the workplace.

The thesis explores these questions via a case study of one trade union branch, the Cape Town Metropolitan Council branch of the South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU). A brief introduction to this case study will be provided later in this chapter.

The following section will trace the origin of my research questions by referring to two overlapping histories: the history of the trade union movement and its educational work; and my own history as an adult educator, labour researcher and worker educator. I will present a critically-reflective account of my own role within the history of trade union education, as well as identify some broad lines of enquiry about worker education and knowledge that were posed to me through my involvement in this history, and which later formed the basis of the research questions underpinning this thesis.

¹ Definitions of informal, non-formal and formal education are not clear in the literature (Walters, 1998; Colley et al, 2003). In this thesis, I use 'informal' to refer to 'spontaneous' or 'incidental' learning in everyday life situations; 'non-formal' to refer to non-accredited but organised education that takes place outside the formal education system, and 'formal' to refer to education for formal accreditation in schools, colleges and universities (HSRC, 1991).

Worker education in South Africa, and the 'learning history' of this researcher

My own interest in worker education goes back more than thirty years. In 1973, after a fifteen-year period of severe repression of political organisations and trade unions alike², thousands of workers in Natal embarked on a strike wave. Like others amongst a small group of white intellectuals and students at the time, this re-awakening of workers' mass action and the re-emergence of worker organisation following the 1973 strikes served as a catalyst for my own involvement in worker education in the ensuing years, and acted as a gravitational force in my political and intellectual development.

After the 1973 strikes, a range of educational projects emerged that aimed to support the re-building of trade unions for black workers. In many of these, white intellectuals and students played a leading role³. Other education projects operated under the umbrella of the church⁴ while yet others were aligned to the Black Consciousness movement⁵. These organisations offered workers education in the form of formal courses, training workshops, discussion groups, seminars and literacy programmes, and through education media such as newsletters, pamphlets and workers' calendars. (For more detail, see Vally, 1994; Cooper et al, 2002: 115-6).

Amongst some of those based in these education projects at the time, there were intense conflicts over what the focus and priorities of worker education should be. Some saw their role as developing the broad political consciousness of different layers of workers in order to guard against trade union 'economism'; others saw their role as providing a broad, general education to promote the personal and professional development of workers; a third view – one which eventually became dominant – was that education should be directly tied to the emerging trade

² The South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) – allied to the anti-apartheid Congress Alliance in the 1950s – had been suppressed and went 'underground' in the early 1960s.

³ These included the Urban Training Project (UTP) and the Industrial Aid Society (IAS) in the Transvaal, the Institute for Industrial Education (IIE) in Natal, and the Western Province Workers Advice Bureau (WPWAB).

⁴ For example, Young Christian Workers (YCW).

⁵ For example, the Black People's Convention (BPC).

unions' organisational needs, and oriented primarily towards building factory-floor leadership (Seftel, 1983, Maree, 1985, Friedman, 1987).

My involvement as a student activist began in the 1970s helping to produce a workers' newspaper⁶, and later in a Freirian-oriented, adult literacy programme.⁷ As useful as these education projects might have been in stimulating or supporting the emerging trade union movement in the 1970s, I was later to come to the conclusion that the most pervasive and significant processes of workers' learning arose not from these education interventions, but from workers' own involvement in their organisations where knowledge was shared and new understandings sought and produced. Through their day-to-day experience of organising and running meetings, workers developed new understandings about worker democracy and worker control; in the process of running increasingly large and complex organisations, elected worker leaders developed a range of organisational and leadership skills; and in defending themselves against attacks from employers and the state, workers learnt about the nature of the economy and political power. These realisations stimulated a desire on my part to understand better the processes of learning and nature of the knowledge produced in these different organisationally-based sites.

In 1979, the apartheid government – anxious to control the new and increasingly militant unions – introduced new legislation that allowed for the legal recognition of black trade unions, but under strict controls. Even before this, a new Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) was established on the principles of non-racialism and strong shop-floor organisation, while the following year, the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA) was formed by a more black-consciousness aligned grouping of trade unions. Within these federations, education became increasingly more planned and structured. Education focused on political education, labour history and the local and international political economy; as black trade unions increasingly involved themselves in the established industrial relations machinery of the workplace, education programmes also began to focus on labour law, and on the procedural knowledge to engage in negotiations with the owners of industry.

⁶ The title of the newspaper was *Abasabenzi* ('Workers').

⁷ Both these projects were loosely linked to the WPWAB.

Internationally, the trade union movement has been a site of contestation by different ideological currents, and has held in tension more 'accommodationist' and more 'transformatory' tendencies (see Welton, 1987a and b, and London, Tarr and Wilson, 1990, referred to later in this chapter). In South Africa during the 1980s, while many trade unions engaged more and more with industrial relations issues, some sections of the labour movement became increasingly politically radicalised and together with other popular forces at the time, began to directly challenge the apartheid state and the racial capitalism on which it was based. The political orientation of some sections of the labour movement was echoed in an emerging philosophy of education and knowledge, which included the following principles: that workers have knowledge of value that emerges out of their collective experience and is rooted in organisation and action; that workers' education is partisan and political and should adopt a working class view of the world; that workers should control their own education programmes; and that the purpose of such education is to empower the oppressed and transform society (for more detail, see Cooper, 1998a: 144-148). The trade unions also began to espouse a methodological approach that placed priority on workers' experiences as a source of knowledge, encouraged active learner participation, and blurred the boundaries between educator and learner (Cooper, 1998a).

Grossman (1999) has argued that workers' experiences of organising not only produced new understandings and skills, but also stimulated a thirst for new knowledge. One response to this thirst for knowledge was the emergence of new forms of worker self-education, such as the 'siyalala's'⁸ organised by shop-steward councils, where worker leaders gained increased confidence to engage and sometimes challenge the intellectual leadership of the unions around controversial organisational and political issues (Ginsberg, 1997). Also linked to the emergence of new forms of worker self-activity was the growth of a workers' cultural movement in the form of worker plays, poetry and choirs (see von Kotze, 1984; Sitas, 1986; Kromberg, 1993). In addition, the 1980s saw the mushrooming of a range of new forms of literature and media produced by 'labour service

⁸ isiZulu/isiXhosa for 'sleep-overs'.

organisations' (LSOs), and aimed at a worker readership or audience (see Cooper, 1985 and 1986)⁹.

In October 1985, amid unprecedented popular mobilisation against the apartheid government, COSATU was formed¹⁰. COSATU's founding policies constituted a radical critique of capitalism, and put forward a vision of a socialist future. Its inaugural resolutions on education reflected its radical politics. These resolutions noted that "education is vital in the liberation of the working class", and resolved to ensure that its education programme "politicises, mobilises and organises the working class so that they play the leading role in the liberation of our society and its transformation into ... a system that will serve the needs of those who are now oppressed and exploited" (COSATU, 1985).

"Education is our spear in the struggle for Socialism" argued COSATU's first education secretary (COSATU, 1986), while in a speech to COSATU's first national education conference, the General Secretary argued that worker education (in opposition to bourgeois education) should:

build worker control, collective experience and understanding, deepening working class consciousness. Education should ensure fullest discussion amongst workers thus building democracy. Education is a weapon for shaping mass struggles of the present and the future of our class (COSATU, 1986).

The labour movement's education policies influenced other sections of the working class during this period: "The development of its vision of worker education was ... closely linked with community and school struggles for a 'People's Education'" (Cooper et al: 2002: 122). While the stated intentions were clear, we know very little about how these educational philosophies and principles translated into practice, or the nature of the pedagogy that was *actually* enacted within trade union education programmes.

⁹ In the early 1980s, producers of this literature included WITS History Workshop, the Labour History Group, the International Labour Research & Information Group (ILRIG), Learn & Teach, Labour and Economic Research Committee (LERC), Work in Progress (WIP) and UTP. 'Popular' publications also included Makhoba (1984) and Barret (1985).

¹⁰ The more black consciousness-aligned unions were later to form a smaller trade union federation, National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU).

History poses educational questions

Throughout the 1980s, I was involved in the work of labour service organisations, first in the Labour History Group and later in the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG). As a worker education practitioner, I learnt to value the knowledge that workers developed through their own experience and the innovative ways in which they shared knowledge in the context of collectivity. In both my own and other worker education projects, a range of questions emerged and began to be debated around issues such as:

- How do pedagogy and learning vary across sites within the workers' movement?
- What is the relationship between knowledge which workers gain through their experiences and mass action on the one hand, and the knowledge which is brought to workers by 'outside experts' on the other, and how are these different forms of knowledge valued?
- How methodologically should educators based in LSOs outside the labour movement deal with the ideological contestation that pervades the labour movement? Should we be 'pushing a political line' or remaining ideologically neutral?
- What can be done about unequal power relationships between educators and learners where most learners are black and working class with relatively low levels of formal education, and where many educators are drawn from white, middle class, intellectual backgrounds?

(See for example, Cooper, 1985 and 1986; Grossman, 1988; Jordi, 1991.)

In the mid- to late-1980s increasing numbers of intellectuals and academics were drawn to the labour movement and began to research and publish on its history and politics¹¹. There was growing interest in theorising workers' culture (see Sole, 1983; Sitas, 1984 and 1990; Bonnin, 1987; Kromberg, 1993), although this literature did not focus much on the educational significance of workers' culture.

¹¹ See for example, McShane, Plaut and Ward (1984), Friedman (1987), Maree (1987), Lambert and Webster (1988) and Baskin (1991).

The growth of worker education within this movement also stimulated research into the history of worker education in South Africa, for example, Seftel (1983), Bird (1984), Maree (1985). (See also later studies such as Vally, 1994; Ginsberg, 1997; Lowry, 1999; and Andrews, 2003).

With the exception of Andrew's (2003) recent study, the historical studies of worker education do not seek to theorise the nature of trade union pedagogy from an educational perspective, but they do succeed in capturing some of the key questions that were being posed by the growth of the labour movement concerning the relationship between workers' self-activity, their increased politicisation, and the growth in trade union education work. Seftel (1983) and Bird (1984) consider the contending political currents within worker's education initiatives historically, ranging from Communist, Trotskyist, liberal, reformist and black consciousness traditions, while Maree (1984) focuses on ideological struggles within the education support projects in the 1970s. Maree (1985) and Ginsberg (1997) both interrogate in different ways the nature of power relationships between white intellectuals and 'organic' intellectuals within the labour movement, against the backdrop of the union movement's commitment to democratic worker control. Vally (1994) and Lowry (1999) provide detailed, empirical information on trade union education initiatives from the 1970s to the 1990s, including their espoused education theory and views on education methodologies, while Andrews (2003) tracks the shifts in COSATU's policies on workers education from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s.

Historical change poses new questions

The unbanning of the ANC and other political organisations in 1990 marked the beginning of the transition to non-racial democracy in South Africa. As noted earlier, in the post-apartheid period there have been significant changes in the political trajectory of the labour movement, and these political changes have been reflected in a shift from trade union education in order 'to build struggle', to trade union education to build internal organisational management capacity and a new emphasis on workplace education and training for national economic development.

From the early 1990s, representatives of the labour movement worked together with representatives of business and government to develop a new, national education and training policy. COSATU's new policies proposed that workers should have access to a process of 'lifelong education and training' that would be based on a broad education foundation and promote 'flexible, transferable skills' in order to ensure 'horizontal' and 'vertical' mobility. This would be linked to broad-banding of skills categories and career paths leading to greater job security and job satisfaction. A strong emphasis on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was aimed at ensuring that the skills and knowledge that workers acquired through work and life experience would be recognised and accredited so that they could gain access to further learning and better job opportunities (Bird, 1990; ANC/COSATU, 1993). COSATU representatives became involved in the establishment of a South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and later, in standards-generating bodies and Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). At plant and company level, unions became involved in the development of workplace skills plans¹², the provision of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), and in workplace training and grading issues.

These shifts in the trade union movement's education policies and concerns need to be viewed against the backdrop of broader political and demographic changes within the labour movement. In 1996 the ANC formally adopted GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution), a macro-economic policy promoting privatisation and the expansion of many non-standard forms of employment, both of which have contributed to the weakening and undermining of trade unions. Growing retrenchments and unemployment led to the contraction of union membership, particularly amongst its historic core of 'semi-skilled' and 'unskilled' black workers, while the expansion of unions in the public sector resulted in a growing proportion of more formally educated, white-collar union members (Baskin, 1996). Von Holdt argues that power within the union movement has been redistributed to those with more formal expertise, leading to a decline in the movement's participatory, democratic culture, a growing gap between leadership and rank-and-file, and an emerging ideology of upward

¹² Provided for in the Skills Development Act (1998) and Skills Levy Act (1998).

mobility (von Holdt, 2003: 293-4), while Buhlungu (2000) has pointed to an “emerging culture of political silencing” within the union movement.

A number of writers argue that these changes have impacted on trade unions’ own education in significant ways. Andrews (2003: 160) argues that there has been an overall shift from a ‘radical’ or ‘transformatory’ approach to a ‘reformist’ or ‘instrumental’ educational approach, suggesting that this change is related to the undermining of the mass struggle and democratic control of workers within the trade union movement. Increased value has been placed on specialised, technical expertise rather than on experiential knowledge; educational resources have been re-directed towards top leadership and full-time staff rather than mass membership; and there has been a growing tendency to elect those with higher levels of formal education into leadership positions (see Keet, 1992; Collins, 1994; Grossman, 1999). There has also been a move towards increased formalisation and professionalisation of trade union education, driven by some trade union staff and sections of worker leadership (see Ditsela 1997, 1998)¹³.

A number of key questions are posed relating to how these historical shifts in the political character and role of the trade union movement have impacted on who or what ‘teaches’ workers; the nature of trade union pedagogy and where (and how) learning takes place within the union; whose ‘voice’ is dominant in the ideological contestation within union education; the nature of educator and learner roles and power relations between them; the kinds of knowledge and expertise that are valued; and trade union education’s historic role in social change.

An intellectual journey through the literature on worker education

My ongoing interest in worker education led me on an intellectual journey to find literature and theory that might offer some answers to the key questions posed by the historical and current practices of worker education in South Africa. Long before I embarked on the specific research for this thesis, my long-standing

¹³ At the end of 1996 of a new, national trade union education institute, DITSELA (Development Institute for the Training, Support and Education of Labour), was established to offer more systematic training programmes. By 2005, it was offering a number of ‘advanced’ programmes in conjunction with higher education institutions, and carrying a university qualification (see Cooper, 2002a).

interest in labour history had led me to the literature on the history of worker education internationally.

Historical studies of worker education

There are a number of comprehensive histories of British, Canadian and American worker education. Welton's work (1987a and b, 1991) on the history of Canadian workers' education in the early years of the 20th century paints a wide canvass, and of all these historians, he most concerns himself with trying to theorise sociologically the nature of worker education. He argues that workers' education needs to be seen as a *dimension* of workers' culture and politics, and that there are therefore "notorious difficulties in delineating the boundaries of worker education" (1991: 25). The boundaries of workers' education ought to be drawn so that we can study both 'schools of labour' and 'labour's schools': 'schools of labour' are the socially-organised workplaces where important technical, social, political and ideological experiential learning occurs¹⁴; 'labour's schools' on the other hand are "those spaces that workers' themselves, their leaders or sympathetic pedagogues open up for reflection on the meaning of their work and culture" (Welton, 1991: 25). These include the 'educational moments' of organisational and political activity, specific educational forms created by workers themselves (such as media), as well as worker education programmes offered by outside agencies.

Welton argues that internationally, workers' education has always been a site of contestation and struggle: "The struggles of workers can be viewed as a contest between supporters of conflicting visions of what constitutes valid enlightenment, empowerment, and transformative action" where "competing discourses struggle with one another for hegemony" (1991: 37-8).

Welton's notion of workers' education being a site of ideological and political struggle is echoed in the literature on the history of British workers' education. Philips and Putnam (1980), focusing on the Movement for Independent Working Class Education (IWCE) in Britain in the first part of the century, describe how ideological contestation for control over worker education was (in part, at least) a

¹⁴ He cites Marx who called the workplace the 'harsh but hardening school of labour' (Welton, 1991: 25).

struggle between the 'plebs' (the grassroots level of the workers' movement) versus the 'tribunes' (the established trade union leadership) of the working class movement (Putnam, 1980: 23.). MacIntyre (1980), also writing on the labour college movement, argues that this contestation involved two fundamentally different conceptions of the movement's purpose. The 'tribunes' view (one which ultimately prevailed) saw the movement as the educational arm of the trade unions, and wanted to give priority to training of shop-stewards and officials in techniques of industrial negotiation and union management. The 'plebs' view – following the original Marxist character of the movement – emphasised its role as a political movement, and the importance of retaining its autonomy and its emphasis on rank-and-file education.

Some similarities became evident between the nature of these ideological struggles and the intense debates that permeated the education projects associated with the early growth of the contemporary trade union movement in South Africa (see Seftel, 1983 and Bird, 1984). Likewise, some of the recent political and ideological shifts within the South African trade union movement's education policies and philosophy seem to echo political and ideological shifts within British and American trade union education that took place over a much longer period of time. For example, London, Tarr and Wilson's *The re-education of the American working class* (1990) presents a critical account of the history of worker education in the USA from its radical phase in the early years of the 20th century, to a 'corporatist' or 'instrumental' orientation in the later years of the century.¹⁵

The historical literature on workers' education underlines the importance, firstly, of conceptualising worker's education as happening not only in recognisably pedagogic contexts (such as courses or seminars) but also as a dimension of workers' political and organisational engagement and cultural activity. Secondly, it demonstrates the highly politicised and contested nature of workers' education – something that seems to have been a constant feature across very different historical periods, and across different countries. This ideological contestation,

¹⁵ John Field (in Lovett, 1988) makes a very similar argument about shifts in British trade unionism and workers' education, as do a number of contributors to Brian Simon's *The Search for Enlightenment* (1990) which takes the reader from 'the struggle for hegemony' in working class education in the first two or three decades of the twentieth century to the rise to dominance of 'technical training' in the post-war period.

and the central role of 'ideology' more generally, was particularly apparent in my workers' education involvement in the midst of heightened political mobilisation in South Africa in the 1980s. This led me to seek out theories of ideology and to explore a body of literature whose central focus was on political philosophy rather than on history.

Workers' education, ideology and class consciousness

My journey through this literature began with the classical theories of ideology and class consciousness: from the 'base-superstructure' of Marx, to Lucaks' and the Frankfurt School's views of ideology as 'false consciousness', to Althusser's notion of the role of ideological state apparatuses in constituting the subject and reproducing the central social relations in society, and his notion of ideological practice as a terrain of class struggle (see for example, Marx 1859, 1968; Althusser, 1971; Eagleton, 1991). I finally encountered the writings of Gramsci (1971) and of cultural theorists such as those based in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University (CCCS, 1978). I found most of this literature – with the significant exception of Gramsci – difficult to apply to concrete historical cases and unable to fully account for how ideological struggle relates to pedagogic practice and worker education in particular.

The work of Gramsci has inspired many educationalists and adult educators (see for example, Entwistle, 1979; Jackson & Parr, 1981; Simon, 1982; Allman & Wallis, 1995; Coben, 1995; Holst, 1999, Colucci, 1999). For Gramsci, the concept of hegemony is central. The concept of hegemony is broader than that of ideology, and not reducible to it. While ideology is the way in which power struggles are fought out at the level of signification, hegemony operates at the multiple levels of ideology, culture, politics and the economy (Eagleton, 1991:112-3). Hegemony is the way in which power relations become the 'common sense' of the whole social order (Eagleton, 1991: 114). Gramsci's concept of hegemony transforms the concept of ideology from one concerned only with ideas to one concerned also with practice, with the lived process of political domination (Eagleton, 1991: 115). The hegemony of the ruling class is never complete or secure – it must continuously struggle to renew, defend and

recreate itself. The task for revolutionaries is to create a counter-hegemony¹⁶ – a proletarian hegemony – to challenge that of the ruling class.

What Gramsci's work suggested was that it might be useful to conceptualise trade union education in South Africa as a form of counter-hegemony, and that such forms of counter-hegemony should be sought not only in workers' ideas, but also in their practices. In fact, fundamental to the creation of proletarian hegemony were 'organs of people's power', organisations (like the trade unions) created by and for the working class (Holst, 1999: 415). For Gramsci, it was the factory councils created during a revolutionary upsurge in northern Italy in 1920 (rather than the more reformist Italian trade unions) that represented 'praxis' (Entwistle, 1979: 160- 165), the fusion between theory and practice required for the development of proletarian hegemony. Here, workers learnt through their own experience about democracy and power. These organisations served concretely to break down the hegemony of the bourgeoisie over workers' minds and to empower them to 'think' themselves into historical autonomy, and learn how to exercise power (Williams, 1975). To my mind, Gramsci's notion of 'education through praxis' – the development of working class consciousness through political and industrial experience – were echoed in the perspectives on worker education espoused by many trade union intellectuals in South Africa in the anti-apartheid and anti-capitalist struggles of the 1970s and 1980s.

The debates amongst those involved in South African worker education in the 1980s roused my interest in how Gramsci, and other Marxist thinkers like Lenin who concerned themselves with questions of 'how the working class learns', viewed the relationship between political leadership and mass following. Who educates whom, and who learns from whom? And what forms of knowledge does each of these groups contribute to the learning process?

A comprehensive political biography of Lenin (Harding, 1983) argues that Lenin's views on these questions evolved alongside his own practice and experience of revolutionary activity over time. In the Russian worker study circles led by young political intellectuals in the 1880s, the working class was viewed

¹⁶ Holst (1999) points out that Gramsci never used the term 'counter-hegemony' but spoke rather of 'communist' or 'proletarian' hegemony.

largely as passive: they were to be tutored, guided and led by the radical intelligentsia (Harding, 1983: 49-50). However, after a massive strike movement swept Russia during the late 1880s and later during the 1905 revolution, Lenin evolved his ideas around the development of consciousness and shifted his views on 'who' or 'what' teaches workers. He argued: "... proletarian consciousness arose not out of theoretical induction and the educational work of intellectuals and worker-intellectuals: it had its origins, and was refined and developed, in the course of the very struggle for existence of the working mass" (quoted in Harding, 1983: 112). Lenin explicitly began to allocate importance to the role of *experience* – practice and struggle – in educating the working class and in developing a revolutionary consciousness: "Revolution teaches ... in the course of the fight events themselves will suggest to the working masses the right tactics to adopt" (quoted in Harding, 1983: 234).

Although he acknowledged the role of workers' experience as a source of knowledge, for Lenin, the party and the radical intelligentsia retained a crucial role because they brought a different kind of knowledge. While the mass of workers would achieve political consciousness 'sensuously' through mass action, the radical intelligentsia would come to consciousness through reflection, study and extrapolation from theory. They brought to the workers' movement understanding of emerging class patterns, a superior knowledge of international history, and an ability to reflect on and systematise wider collective experience into economic and social patterns, all of which gave them the ability to formulate predictive models, and to specify future trends (Harding, 1983: 242).

Like Lenin, Gramsci retained an important role for the party, and saw the leadership as having a directive and organisational function which is educative: their role is to transform the 'commonsense' knowledge of the masses into critical, intellectual activity or 'good sense'. However, he had a less hierarchical view than Lenin of the relationship between workers' knowledge and intellectuals' knowledge, and between the political leadership and the masses. Gramsci believed that the working class had to create its own organic intellectuals whose knowledge would be superior not only in the intellectual sense, but also because it would be based on 'feeling and passion':

Intellectuals' error consists in believing that it is possible to *know* without understanding and especially without feeling and passion If the relations between intellectuals and the people-nation, between leaders and led, is the result of organic participation in which feelings and passion become understanding and thence knowledge ... then and then only is the relation one of representation (Gramsci, 1971, emphasis in original).

In other words, the knowledge of highest value would be a synthesis of the dichotomous 'knowledge of the masses' and 'knowledge of the intelligentsia' outlined by Lenin. According to Walters, for Gramsci:

The role of the adult educator, in the form of the organic intellectual or the party was clear. The educator needed to be *directive* in the process of 'connecting people's historical experience dialectically with the laws of history' (Walters, 1989: 100, emphasis added)

However an educational relationship which acknowledged the superiority of the teacher's knowledge was not necessarily authoritarian, because Gramsci's emphasis on the importance of knowledge being generated through praxis worked against the notion of an authoritarian teacher-learner relationship (Walters, 1989: 101).

It is striking how many of these early Marxist views on the education of the working class, as well as the questions which they tried to address (How do workers learn? Who or what teaches? Of what value are different forms of knowledge to the workers' movement?) were echoed in the debates amongst worker educators involved in the South African trade union movement in the 1980s. However, the literature on ideology, hegemony and class consciousness says little about the forms of pedagogy that might accomplish the development of class consciousness or achievement of counter-hegemony that the classical Marxist writers fore-grounded.

In an attempt to answer some of the questions raised above, I turned my attention to the literature on 'critical pedagogy' and popular education to see what it could contribute to an understanding of these questions.

Critical pedagogy and popular education

Paulo Freire, the radical Brazilian educator whose writings inspired many in the 'critical pedagogy' movement, owed much of an intellectual debt to Gramsci, as

evidenced in his notions of praxis (the fusion of theory and practice); his concern with 'conscientisation'; his views on learning as a dialectical process; and the important role of people's *culture* in the education process.

Freire's writings (1970, 1976) inspired many of those involved in South African worker education (including myself)¹⁷ in the 1970s and 1980s in a very practical sense, and his education methodologies seemed to offer an answer to the question of how to address unequal power relations between educators and learners. However, Freire does not adequately address the issue of power relations between educator and learner, and he has been criticised for his oversimplistic categories of 'oppressed' and 'oppressors' (see, in particular, feminist writers such as Gore, 1998; Ellsworth, 1989; Tisdell, 1993; and Weiler, 1996). Freire has responded to some of these criticisms, acknowledging that power relations between educator and learners cannot be wished away, and that the facilitator can never be non-directive but has a 'dialogical duty' to teach rather than merely 'facilitate' (see Freire & Macado, 1995). However, he leaves unresolved the question of the political and ideological role of the educator: how is it possible for the educator to be 'directive', while at the same time being 'dialogical'?

The 'contradictory role of the popular educator' has been widely debated in the literature on radical pedagogy. Liam Kane (2001), in a wide-ranging study of popular education in Latin America, argues that "the essence of popular education is that it cannot be neutral" (Kane, 2001: 155). He notes that there is considerable ideological diversity within the popular education movement in Latin America, ranging from more 'vanguardist' Marxist versions to those that see ordinary people – not an intellectual leadership – as the agents of radical change. Even in terms of the latter:

... while popular education seeks to 'problematise' rather than present solutions, and the methodology is one in which educator-activists encourage discussion and analysis by posing questions rather than by giving speeches, it is an illusion to think that questions are inherently more ideologically independent than statements (Kane, 2001:161)

¹⁷ In the early 1970s, the ideas and methodologies of Paulo Freire were introduced into the Black Consciousness movement via the radical University Christian Movement. These ideas and methodologies found their way into the emerging black trade union movement via the Urban Training Project (UTP).

The issue of the 'contradictory role of the popular educator' continues to have resonance in the South African trade union context, as evidenced in a paper prepared for a trade union education conference in the late 1990s (Pape, 2000). Here, two common approaches to trade union education are critiqued: the 'missionary' approach which sees trade union education as 'an opportunity to win new converts', and the approach of 'objective academics' who 'try to hide their views' and 'present all positions as if they carry equal weight and validity'. Both approaches are problematic:

The missionary sees union members as passive zealots who chant slogans and repeat key phrases without being able to analyse or criticize The objective academic sees unions as debating societies, not as organizations engaged in struggle (Pape, 2000: 11).

Pape concludes by putting forward numerous practical suggestions as to how trade union programmes of political education can build a membership 'that thinks and acts in a critical but progressive manner' (Pape, 2000: 14), but the principles of such pedagogy are not theorised.

In the course of this research, two significant bodies of literature emerged which attempt to theorise non-formal and informal learning: the literature on 'learning in social movements', and the literature on 'the learning organisation', and it is to a consideration of this literature that this chapter now moves.

Learning and knowledge in social movements

The impact of globalisation has seen the rise of anti-globalisation movements and struggles, and alongside this, a growing interest in new social movements as sites of both learning as well as new knowledge production. This has given rise to a burgeoning literature on the relationship between social movements and adult education (see for example, Finger 1989; Welton 1993 and 1995; Spencer, 1995; Holford, 1995; Crowther et al, 1999). Given the South African labour movement's historical tradition of 'social movement unionism' (Lambert and Webser, 1988), it seemed to me that the literature on learning in social movements could offer some useful perspectives for my research.

One of the more interesting of these perspectives is that social movements are not only sites of learning, but that they also generate new knowledge. Martin argues

that social movement activity generates both social and intellectual capital, the former through people developing social cohesion and solidarity, and the latter through the production of new knowledge:

... not only do people learn through their engagement with social movements but ... these movements actually make and disseminate new knowledge and understanding through their activity. It is in this sense that they constitute 'epistemological communities'... (Martin, 1999: 12).

Holford goes further and argues that: "The forms of knowledge which exist in any society are ... the products in part of the social movements which have emerged in, or had an impact on, that society" (Holford, 1995:101). He, in turn, draws on the work of Eyerman and Jamison (1991) who view the process whereby a movement is formed and establishes an identity for itself as 'cognitive praxis', in which 'movement intellectuals' play a crucial role.

This literature is sociological in its emphasis, and has generally not engaged with theories of learning that pertain to more specialised educational domains. Kilgore (1999) argues that what the field of adult education needs is to develop a theory of collective learning for the study of individuals and groups engaged in collective action. Although she herself does not elaborate what such a theory might be, she does suggest what a 'theory of collective learning' would need to do:

Research toward a theory of collective learning would be located in a local context such as one of the many unique affinity groups within a larger social movement ... A theory of collective learning would also consider the local learning community within the larger field of meaning making ... (which) would include the social, economic and political contexts of collective social actions ... (and) include other groups with which the local learning community interacts. Conflict would be central in understanding the external interplay among groups in a larger field of meaning making" (Kilgore, 1999: 200).

Foley (1999, 2001) and Newman (1994, 1999) both focus on 'learning in social action' more broadly, and have an interest in " ... incidental learning which occurs as people live, work and engage in social action; informal education and learning in which people teach and learn from each other naturally and socially in workplaces, families, community organisations and social action" (Foley, 1999: 6-7). Learning in such sites is largely informal and often incidental: it is tacit,

embedded in action and is often not recognised as learning. A central contention of Foley's work is that

in order to understand informal and incidental learning in social action and sites we need to develop analyses which take account of specific social contexts, and which treat all aspects of adult learning as socially constructed and problematic. This requires both a broader notion of context and more detailed, specific analyses than are usually found in adult education theory (1999: 47-8).

Foley argues in a later article that what is required in order to understand “the what, how and why of informal learning in everyday and popular struggle” are ethnographies of communities, but “with the learning dimension added” (Foley, 2001: 85). Two central issues in such a study would be (1) the extent to which everyday experiential learning is implicit and embedded in other activities, and the extent to which it is, or can be, deliberately fostered; and (2) the extent to which everyday experiential learning reproduces relations of exploitation and oppression, and the extent to which it does, or can, resist and help to transcend, such relations (Foley, 2001: 85).

The ‘learning organisation’ and ‘knowledge society’

There has been a growing interest over the past fifteen years in the changing nature of social and production relations, and the implications of this for emerging forms of workplace knowledge and new approaches to learning. A body of literature has emerged debating the relationship between ‘working knowledge’ and other kinds of knowledge, and expounding notions of ‘the learning organisation’ and ‘knowledge society’.

My interest in learning within the trade union context drew me at first to the notion of ‘the learning organisation’: “... an organisation which learns continually and has the capacity to transform itself” (Marsick & Watkins, 1999: 206). I was interested in the ‘learning organisation’ literature’s¹⁸ concern with how organisations mobilise their resources towards new learning and the production of

¹⁸ See for example, Davenport and Prusak, 1998; Guile and Young, 1998a; Boud and Garrick, 1999; Nooteboom, 1999; Nonaka and Nishiguchi, 2001.

knowledge, as well as how these processes reconfigure individual and collective identities¹⁹.

The 'learning organisation' literature has, however, taken a narrow view on what constitutes 'an organisation', with most writers tending to assume that all organisations are guided by the logic of profit-oriented enterprises to compete successfully in the global marketplace, and has been the subject of wide critique. Of particular relevance to this thesis, Mojab and Gorman (2001) critique the learning organisation model's 'emancipatory promises': that it will bring greater inclusion and thus more collaborative decision-making; that it will transform work organisation with its interdisciplinary work teams and flattened organisational structures; and that it will increase opportunities to learn. They argue that the need for labour 'flexibility', 'reskilling' and 'upgrading' in order to enhance global competitiveness means that the learning organisation benefits only a small fraction of the workforce – management teams of corporations and financial institutions – and is designed to attract and keep elite 'information workers'. Workers who are 'outsourced', 'contracted out', temporary, casual and/or part-time get little benefit and are given little opportunity to contribute their learning to the 'knowledge pool'. This model of the learning organisation also takes for granted that 'the organisation' should own and control the results of workers' learning, and it seeks to extend capital's social control of workers by appropriating their 'social capital' to its own ends, thereby "separating workers from themselves" (Mojab & Gorman, 2001: 235-6). They conclude by saying that rather than the learning organisation model: "... the educational legacies of feminism, trade unionism, antiracism, and revolutionary struggle are better places to seek the learning interests of the workers that make up the learning organisation" (Mojab and Gorman, 2001: 228).

The focus of this thesis will remain on 'the learning interests of the workers that make up the learning organisation'. However, it is important to note that new discourses of workplace training have entered the education and training policies

¹⁹ Some writers (eg. Gibbons et al, 1994; Barnett, 2000) have foregrounded questions around new forms of knowledge, while others (eg. Guile & Young, 1998b; Garrick, 1999; Mulcahy, 2000) focus on training practice, and emphasise the usefulness of Vygotskian and post-Vygotskian perspectives such as that of the Situated Learning theorists in understanding new processes of learning.

of the South African labour movement in recent years, and may also have impacted on its own, internal pedagogic practices.

Returning to the research questions

As noted earlier, this thesis aims to document and theorise processes of learning and forms of pedagogy and knowledge in the trade union organisational context.

The main questions that have guided this research are:

Within the organisational and social context of the South African labour movement, how do workers learn, what forms of pedagogy facilitate their learning, and what kinds of knowledge do they acquire and produce?

And related to this:

How do processes of learning and forms of pedagogy and knowledge vary across settings within the union, and in the context of changes in the broader historical context and the trade unions' social and political role?

Embedded in these questions lies a range of more complex, analytical questions. Some of these questions emerge out of the historical development of the South African labour movement and have been posed by trade union members and by labour educators allied to this movement. Many of these questions are also echoed in the literature covering disparate areas such as the history of worker education internationally, theories of ideology and class consciousness, popular education and critical pedagogy, and theories of learning within social movements, suggesting that these questions have emerged out of workers' movements and trade union educational work across very different times and places. These questions cluster around a number of common lines of enquiry that will guide the investigation in this thesis:

- Where and how does education and learning take place within the trade union, and how does the nature of pedagogy, learning and knowledge vary across sites within the organisation?
- Who plays the roles of educator and learner, and what is the nature of these roles and relationships of power between them?

- Who or what ‘teaches’ workers within the context of their own organisations?
- What is the relationship between knowledge derived from workers’ own experience, and that derived from outside of their experiences, namely, more ‘scientific, academic, systematised’ knowledge? How are these different forms of knowledge valued?
- How does the nature of ideological contestation (which seems to be central to workers’ education) impact on the nature of trade union pedagogy, and on the role of the trade union educator?
- How have recent changes within the South African labour movement impacted on the historical purpose of trade union education in striving to effect social change? Do education practices within the trade union serve to resist and transcend, or do they reproduce dominant relations of power in society?

Following Kilgore (1999), these questions will be explored by focusing on a local context and considering this local learning community within the larger field of meaning-making, including other groups with which the local community interacts and the broader social, economic and political context. In order to afford an in-depth understanding of particular phenomena in a local context, a case study methodology is used. The following section will provide a brief introduction to the Cape Town Metropolitan Council branch of the South African Municipal Workers’ Union (SAMWU), the union branch that forms the case study of this thesis. Justification for the choice of this case will be provided in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Below, a brief summary will locate the case study historically and contextually, and note some recent changes in workers’ experiences and in the current context in which this union finds itself.

A brief introduction to the case study²⁰

Earlier, this chapter showed that the history of the labour movement in South Africa prior to the end of apartheid was closely intertwined with the broader political history of the country, and characterised by a militant struggle against the apartheid state. The history of the Cape Town Metropolitan Council branch of SAMWU (hereafter, the Cape Town branch of SAMWU) followed a different rhythm however, and was quite atypical of the majority of unions that were to join COSATU in the mid-1980s.

The Cape Town branch of SAMWU had its origins in the Cape Town Municipal Workers' Association (CTMWA) which was established in 1928. In most municipalities, African migrant workers constituted the core of 'unskilled' labourers, but the Western Cape was a 'coloured labour-preference area' and here, municipal labour was undertaken primarily by an urban, coloured working class (SAMWU, n.d.). The vast majority of CTMWA members were Afrikaans-speaking, 'overwhelmingly illiterate' (Rudin, 1996: 37) and almost all male.

The CTMWA's leadership on the other hand was drawn from amongst the more educated and higher paid coloured staff in the municipality. They were rooted in a tradition of 'benefits and welfare', and enjoyed a close and dependent relationship with the (mainly white) City Council (Rudin, 1996: 47). The leadership's paternalism towards ordinary workers was paralleled in a broader political conservatism and in its isolation from other black trade unions²¹, and a defining feature of the CTMWA was that throughout its history, it never brought its members out on strike (Rudin, 1996: 61).

There were various attempts by successive generations of municipal workers to challenge the control over the union by its conservative and elitist leadership, but a more thoroughgoing process of change within CTMWA began only after 1979. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, coloured working class communities and school

²⁰ There exists only one, substantial history of the origins of SAMWU in Cape Town: Jeff Rudin's (1996) doctoral study of the CTMWA. In addition to this source, this sub-section draws on taped interviews with union leaders conducted in 1997 and stored in its archives, as well as a rough draft of an official history of the union, intended to commemorate its 10th year anniversary in 1997 (SAMWU, n.d.).

²¹ In particular, those affiliated to the non-racial SACTU (South African Congress of Trade Unions) which was part of the ANC-led Congress Alliance in the 1950s.

pupils in Cape Town joined the growing popular revolt against the apartheid system, and this – together with some major strikes by workers in other sectors – had a significant radicalising effect on workers within the CTMWA. This ultimately strengthened the confidence of ordinary municipal workers to challenge and unseat their union leadership and led to a process of democratisation of the organisation, the ‘proletarianisation’ of its organisational culture, and the first establishment of systematic union education programmes.

In the mid-1980s, the (renewed) CTMWA played a key role in the unity talks which led to the creation of COSATU in 1985. At the time that CTMWA became an affiliate of COSATU, it represented 11 000 workers in Cape Town; in 1987, when CTMWA merged with four other unions to form a new, national, municipal workers’ union (SAMWU), it made up more than three-quarters of the memberships of the new union (Rudin, 1996: 212). Between 1990 and 1995 SAMWU’s nation-wide membership grew from nearly 30 000 to over 100 000 (SAMWU, n.d.), making it one of COSATU’s larger affiliates.

The union’s expansion was accompanied by growing militancy amongst its members, which reached its peak in the union’s first national strike in 1993, a year before South Africa’s first democratic elections. Since the ANC has been in government, the combativity of municipal workers (along with other public sector workers) has continued, but the nature and extent of this combativity has been affected by a number of significant changes in the post-apartheid period: political changes in local government, changes in the organisation of municipal work and employment patterns in this sector, and internal organisational changes in SAMWU.

Between 1993 and 1998, the structure of local government in South Africa was transformed by a drastic reduction in the number of municipalities and the introduction of a new system of ‘unicity’ government. In Cape Town, restructuring involved a massive reorganisation of between 20 and 30 000 municipal employees, resulting in a widespread sense of confusion and job insecurity amongst workers (ILRIG, 2000).

Workers employed by local government have been affected by the state’s restrictive macro-economic policies which have led to cuts in social spending,

privatisation, outsourcing and commercialisation of municipal services, and the increasing casualisation of labour. These processes have resulted in SAMWU suffering significant membership loss. While ‘unskilled’ jobs have been reduced, there has been simultaneously an increase in the number of union members who have moved into management, ‘white collar’ or artisanal positions as institutionalised racism has eroded (SAMWU, 2003a: 44). In Cape Town and other major cities, SAMWU’s organisational strength has increasingly been rivalled by the Independent Municipal and Allied Trade Union (IMATU), a union with a more conservative history²² and membership base amongst ‘white collar’ workers and management.

A new system of centralised bargaining for municipal employers and unions came into being with the establishment of the South African Local Government Bargaining Council (SALGBC). Although SAMWU fought for the establishment of this body²³, it acknowledges that it holds an inherent danger to worker democracy in that it distances its rank-and-file membership from being directly involved in negotiating around the key issues of wages, conditions of employment and organisational rights (SAMWU, 2003b: 14). In SAMWU’s negotiations with the employer organisation, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), worker leaders often find themselves sitting across the table from councillors who are ex-trade unionists or community activists, but who are now implementing government’s policies of privatisation.

The key questions that guided this research have been set out earlier in this chapter. Focusing on this case study, this thesis will critically analyse forms of pedagogy, learning and knowledge across different sites within the Cape Town branch of SAMWU; explore educator and learner roles and how different forms of knowledge are valued in this organisational context; analyse the impact of ideological contestation on union education; and explore how recent changes within the South African labour movement have impacted on the processes and purposes of trade union education. The thesis aims to pursue this analysis in a way that will promote a ‘conversation’ with more mainstream theories of teaching and

²² IMATU is affiliated to the more politically centrist trade union federation, the Federation of Democratic Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA).

²³ The union argued that it would address major inequalities between town and countryside, and between municipalities with very different political and economic histories.

learning. In order to begin this process, I turn in the following chapter to consider a range of existing theories of pedagogy, learning and knowledge that could provide elements of a conceptual language with which to enter into such a conversation. Before doing so, I briefly outline below the structure of the thesis.

Organisation of the thesis

Chapter 1 has introduced this thesis by outlining the research questions that have guided my research, and has shown how these questions originated in the history of trade union education in South Africa over the past three decades, and in my own involvement in this history. It has also reviewed a number of bodies of literature and theory to which I turned in the process of formulating these questions, and has introduced the case study on which my empirical research is based.

Chapter 2 reviews a broad range of theoretical and conceptual resources that might be drawn upon to analyse education, learning and knowledge in an organisational site which lies outside of the formal education system, which is oriented towards collective needs, and which is oppositional in relation to key centres of social power. At the end of the chapter, a way of drawing on selected conceptual tools from a number of different theoretical perspectives is proposed.

Chapter 3 outlines the overall methodological approach that has guided this research, and makes an argument for the use of a critical, qualitative research methodology, using a case study approach and ethnographic methods of enquiry. The chapter describes and accounts for the research design, and considers issues of validity, generalisability and the politics and ethics of this study.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 each present empirical material which captures important dimensions of education, learning and knowledge in the union. Each chapter deals with a different setting²⁴ within the union: Chapter 4 deals with organised union education programmes; Chapter 5 looks at informal learning through organisational involvement, with a particular focus on union meetings; Chapter 6 looks at the occasion of a large strike as an instance of pedagogy and of learning.

²⁴ The use of the term, 'setting' is explained in Chapter 3.

The empirical material is analysed drawing on conceptual tools from a number of different theoretical perspectives as proposed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 7 addresses the question of what are the key features that characterise learning, pedagogy and knowledge in the trade union context, and concludes that there are a number of distinct – though not necessarily unique – and interrelated features. In considering the significance of these features, the chapter returns to and engages critically with the theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 2, seeking to extend and refine them.

Chapter 8 proposes a tentative analytical model that may facilitate the analysis of pedagogy, learning and knowledge across diverse settings. It concludes the thesis by summarising the findings and briefly considering their broader significance.

A note on racial terminology

Given the racialised history of South Africa, and the exploitative use of ‘race’ during the apartheid era, there is debate and controversy over the continued use of racial categories in the post-apartheid era. This study is unequivocal in its rejection of the notion of ‘race’ on both scientific and moral grounds. At the same time, it has been extremely difficult to avoid reference to ‘race’, given that historically constructed racial categories in this country continue to carry important social meanings and effects. In this thesis, the term ‘Black’ is used in a generic sense for all South Africans historically disenfranchised under apartheid. ‘African’ refers to black South Africans who speak indigenous languages such as isiXhosa, isiZulu or seSotho. ‘Coloured’ refers to South Africans of diverse cultural origins, most of whom speak Afrikaans and/or English as a home language, and who were also disenfranchised under apartheid. ‘White’ refers to South Africans who were classified as ‘of European ancestry’ and enfranchised under apartheid.

CHAPTER 2:

DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

At the outset of this research, the question was posed: what theoretical or conceptual resources can best be drawn upon to describe the nature of pedagogy, learning and knowledge in a collective, organizational context which lies outside of the formal education system, and which is oppositional in relation to key centers of social power? It was shown in Chapter 1 that there are no studies that have as their specific focus the theorisation of pedagogy within a trade union context. However, a broad body of literature exists that seeks to conceptualise pedagogy, learning and knowledge outside of the formal education system, and that has informed this study.

This theoretical material was encountered over an extended period of time, in what was an iterative process of moving back and forth between my primary data, the conceptual material, and an emerging analysis. This chapter presents the theoretical material in a way that seeks to establish a degree of conceptual coherence, while at the same time capturing some sense of the messy journey of conceptual exploration and development which I underwent.

There are intense debates in the sociology of education and knowledge around how to categorise different forms of knowledge. These debates have tended to polarise theorists in two directions: ‘insulation’ and ‘hybridity’:

A central debate in cultural studies and the sociology of knowledge can be characterized in terms of the distinction between *insulation* versus *hybridity*. Insulation ... highlights the integral differences between systems of knowledge and the differences between the forms and standards of judgement proper to them. It stresses the virtues of purity and the dangers of transgression. Hybridity, by contrast, stresses the essential identity and continuity of forms and kinds of knowledge, the permeability of classificatory boundaries and the promiscuity of cultural meanings and domains (Muller, 2000a: 57).

Debates around continuities or differences in systems of knowledge are not simply debates around the classification of knowledge. Embedded in these are assumptions about how learning should take place, and what forms of pedagogy

might best promote such learning; different positions in these debates are also based on competing assumptions about the value of different forms of knowledge to society, which in turn relate to the question of power relations within society.

These debates pose the question: what are the implications of each of these positions for viewing the processes of learning and forms of pedagogy and knowledge within a trade union organisation? This chapter will overview the arguments from different sides of this debate. Loosely following Callon (cited in Muller, 2000a: 64-5), these arguments may be grouped into three main positions. The first grouping of theorists – those propounding a **‘hard boundary’ approach to the sociology of knowledge** – focuses on the internal logic of systems of knowledge; theorists emphasise the essential differences between various structures of knowledge, and conceptualise strong boundaries between formal and everyday forms of knowledge. The second grouping stresses instead a **‘no boundary’** or **‘soft boundary’ approach to the sociology of knowledge**, emphasising the commonalities between different forms of learning and knowledge, as well as between knowledge practices and other kinds of social practice. The third grouping explains **knowledge as an outcome of history and/or contestation or struggle between different social groups**; many of these theorists are concerned with how dominant knowledge practices mirror relations of power, domination and exploitation in society. The final section of this chapter outlines my broad approach to, and definitions of pedagogy, learning and knowledge in the analysis pursued later in this thesis.

The ‘hard boundary’ approach to the sociology of knowledge

A South African ‘hard boundary’ approach to knowledge

In South Africa, Muller has emerged as one of the strongest proponents of a ‘hard boundary’ sociology of education and knowledge (see Muller and Taylor, 1993 and Muller, 2000a & b) and his position has been influential in debates around the transformation of education in the post-apartheid era. He argues that making distinctions is the basis of knowledge, and lies at the heart of education (Muller, 2000a: 1).

Muller emphasises a number of key lines of distinction. He distinguishes between 'non-systematic knowledge' – that is, practical knowledge and local wisdom of all sorts – and systematic knowledge which “provides the basis for reflection upon its bases, and therefore upon the possibility of alternative bases” (Muller, 2000a: 1-2). Parallel to these are the domains of everyday life on the one hand, and the specialized educational domains of the academy, the educational bureaucracy and the school on the other.

Each social domain ... the academic, the bureaucratic, the school and everyday life – is characterized by its own particular institutional locations, organized by particular special interests, *resulting in specific forms of knowledge* (Muller, 2000a: 10, emphasis added).

Muller refers to the domain of 'everyday life' as a “heterogeneous but relatively undifferentiated field” (Muller and Taylor, 1993: 9). He lists the institutional sites comprising this domain as: “... the home, the high street ...the range of public venues and occasions, from weddings to the shopping mall” and other sites where “people make life choices that depend on knowledge of one sort or the other” (Muller, 2000a: 12). It is not stated explicitly, but is likely that he would view the workplace and other institutional or organisational sites of civil society, including trade unions, as belonging to the knowledge domain of 'everyday life'.

Muller sees the 'everyday' domain as a site of identity construction, the construction of social norms that bind thought and action, and of knowledge production and reproduction. Here:

experience is integrated and focused into the continuing identities and traditions to which a person is attached. This occurs through a set of organizing principles which make sense of experience and direct action. These vary from informal conventions to highly coded and objectified law (Muller, 2000a: 112).

He argues that media, various institutions of popular culture, public politics or public interest lobbies all play a role in shaping common and shared understandings, tacitly authorising them (Muller and Taylor 1993: 12). However, in the everyday world, everyday meanings are seldom total or hegemonic:

the process of establishing knowledge for practice... in the everyday world is, by and large, an informal and ever-shifting interpretive process, punctuated by formal moments of high tradition and ritual. For more formal

codifications, for firmer definitions of knowledge, other specialized domains come into play (Muller, 2000a: 13).

Knowledge is transferred across the boundaries of these other specialized domains (the academic, the bureaucratic and the school domain) as well as across the boundary between these domains and that of the 'everyday'. Each example of 'recontextualisation or translation' of knowledge across the boundaries of these domains involves relations of power (Muller, 2000a: 63).

Muller acknowledges the unfortunate consequences of the divide between 'everyday' knowledge and knowledge in the specialised domains. He cites Gramsci's point that the split between mental and manual labour has had the effect of "extracting passion from scientific knowledge and reason from everyday knowledge" (cited in Muller, 2000a: 14). He also acknowledges that knowledge specialization "is a two-edged sword and comes at a price; that of an ever-growing distance from everyday understandings and popular culture" and the "exclusion of all but the initiated from this discourse" (Muller, 2000a: 14).

At the same time, however, he criticises the trend of educators in post-apartheid South Africa who, in the interests of equity and transformation, declare "the radical equality between all forms of thought" (Muller, 2000a: 4). Firstly, he argues that such 'radical progressives' run the risk of parting company with the tradition of critical theory:

To dispense in the interests of equality and democracy with the distinction between analytical narrative and doxa, between analyst and lay person, is, from the view point of critical theory, to risk recycling common sense as good sense and to forego the possibility of generating emancipatory or empowering insight (Deacon and Parker, cited in Muller, 2000a: 137).

Secondly, those who declare that the playing fields of knowledge 'have been levelled' run the risk that people will "stub their toe especially severely on the reefs of social hierarchy which are not displaced but merely removed from view...." Rather what is needed is a dual strategy: "one that knows the border and crosses the line, not one that crosses the line by acting as though the border were not there" (Anzaldua, cited in Muller, 2000a: 71).

Muller's work explicitly draws on the intellectual legacies of two prominent sociologists of education, Durkheim and Bernstein. I turned to these in order to

explore more fully the bases of the perspective that draws stark distinctions between 'everyday' and more 'formal' kinds of knowledge.

Durkheim: Knowledge 'sacred' and 'profane'

Muller describes Durkheim as "the exemplary sociologist of the boundary" (Muller, 2000a: 77). Durkheim draws a fundamental distinction between 'profane' and 'sacred' orders of meaning. The 'profane' refers to how people respond to their everyday world in practical, immediate and particular ways. Conversely, the 'sacred', represented by the world of religion in Durkheim's studies, consists of systems of related but unobservable concepts. These systems of concepts are arbitrary in that they are not tied to observation or experience, but are also objective in the sense that they are shared, social and external to the perceptions of individuals. For Durkheim, religion – a set of collective representations which grows out of communities – is the paradigm of all advanced forms of theoretical knowledge, and a model for all other types of abstract thought such as modern science (Young, 2002: 10-11).

There are a number of key features of Durkheim's schema worth noting. First, science, like religion, arises from the *collective* and not from the individual: "truth is produced in social communities, not by solitary souls in isolated creative ferment, science's persistent self-presentation of the truth-making process to the contrary" (Muller, 2000a: 79). Durkheim's sociology of knowledge therefore breaks with the individualism of Descartes, and makes a powerful case for the social origins of reason or abstract thought (Young, 2002: 12).

Second, the hard distinction between 'everyday' and 'sacred' knowledge is not based on the fact that the latter is necessarily more 'scientific' (for the 'sacred' also includes the 'non-scientific' knowledge of religion) but that the 'everyday' is particular and sensory, while the 'sacred' is non-sensory, generalisable, and able to make non-empirical connections: "What distinguished his view of science was his emphasis on its conceptual rather than its empirical bases..." (Young, 2002: 15). It is worth noting, too, that Durkheim includes within the realm of 'sacred' knowledge social institutions (in his case, religion) whose primary social purpose – like that of trade unions – is not 'education' per se. Durkheim's distinction between 'theoretical' knowledge and 'everyday' knowledge was not a judgement

about one being superior to the other, nor one type of society being more 'advanced' than another; he argued that all societies are characterised by a degree of specialisation between these two types of knowledge, and that both forms of knowledge are critical to human survival (Young, 2002: 12).

Third, the ability to work in abstract in the world of the 'sacred' enables people to project beyond the present to a future or alternative world, whether this be the 'after life' of religion or the hypothetical predictions of science (Young, 2002: 11).

Young (2002) notes that Durkheim's sociology of knowledge is synchronic rather than diachronic, and gives little attention to the development and differentiation of knowledge historically and contextually. Another problem with Durkheim's account is that he gives little attention to the internal stratification of knowledge within societies, and thus neglects the link between power and knowledge (Young, 2002: 12-13). Finally, Durkheim tends to characterise the two worlds of existence in exclusively epistemological terms:

The problem ... is that epistemological domains are not co-terminal with sociological ones. No one lives only in the sacred or only in the profane. The problem also runs deeper: neither the everyday world nor the world of science is epistemologically homogeneous (Muller, 2000a: 82).

This point will prove important for an analysis of learning, pedagogy and knowledge within the trade union context.

Basil Bernstein: 'horizontal' and 'vertical' discourses

Davies has argued of Bernstein that:

He alone in modern sociology has attempted to move from the seconds that make up the classroom moment, through institutional to societal power structures, in a way that not only insists on conceptual consistency but thinks it not worth having unless it produces both models and empirical markers (Davies, 1994: 3).

Bernstein reminds us that questions about education and the role of pedagogic discourse are fundamentally questions about the unequal distribution of social power (Moss, 2000: 62-3). His sociology of education is concerned with both the macro- and micro-logics of power: the former referring to the political and

economic structuring of the field of education and language, and the latter to the production and reproduction of identities and subjectivities in education, and by means of language (Collins, 2000: 75). Bernstein's theory attempts to explain how a given distribution of power and principles of control are translated into specialised principles of communication, and unequally distributed to social groups or classes; further, how this shapes the consciousness of groups/classes in such a way as to relay both opposition and change (Hasan, 2002: 13-14).

Bernstein's later work concentrates on the fundamental relations between forms of knowledge: how they are linked with different subject identities, how they reproduce social power, and how they are distributed through various social and institutional processes. For Bernstein, social power is embedded in the very *structure of knowledge* itself. Like Durkheim, Bernstein gives priority to the differentiation of knowledge, especially the differences between theoretical and everyday knowledge, rather than to its unity. Echoing Durkheim, he argues that all societies have at least two basic classes of knowledge: mundane or everyday knowledge (*horizontal discourse*); and esoteric knowledge (*vertical discourse*). Horizontal discourses are everyday, common-sense forms of knowledge which are usually oral-based. They are local, segmental, context dependent, tacit, multi-layered, and often contradictory across contexts, although not within contexts. Horizontal discourse "serves a function in the immediate present. It emerges in relation to a particular set of circumstances and will travel no further" (Moss, 2000: 56). Vertical discourses are usually text-based, coherent, explicit, systematically structured and/or have specialised languages and modes of inquiry (Bernstein, 1996: 170-1). They are generalisable across contexts, and are orientated to the future: to "what the competence will become by the end of the pedagogic process" (Moss, 2000: 51).

Horizontal and vertical discourses are not only different in structure; they are also acquired differently. While vertical discourses are taught explicitly, and there are distributive rules relating to social power relations which regulate who can gain access to such discourses, horizontal 'everyday' discourses are by definition available to all and are acquired in a localized, context-specific way: they require the specificities of the particular context in order to be activated or realised. Often such knowledge is acquired tacitly through demonstration and modelling rather

than through linguistic elaboration. This knowledge circulates beyond its immediate context through strategies of individual ‘repertoires’ and group ‘reservoirs’ (Bernstein, 1996: 170-72; Bernstein, 1999: 159).

For Bernstein, power does not only reside within the structure of knowledge, but also in its recontextualization, in pedagogic practice. He distinguishes between two main forms of pedagogy. A *performance* model of pedagogy concentrates on the outcomes of learning; it “places the emphasis upon a specific output of the acquirer, upon a particular text the acquirer is expected to construct, and upon the specialised skills necessary to the production of this specific output, text or product” (Bernstein, 1996: 58). A *competence* model of pedagogy concentrates on the process of learning rather than the outcome. It foregrounds “(t)he realization of competences that acquirers already possess, or are thought to possess” (Bernstein, 1996: 58).

Inside pedagogic practice, power is embedded in a number of ways. It is embedded in the way that knowledge is organised into curriculum (*classification*), and in the relationship between educator and learner and the degree of control that the educator or learner has over the curriculum (*framing*) (Savodnik, 1995: 9-10).²⁵ Bernstein makes the point (important in relation to informal education) that power is not only exercised in overtly hierarchical teacher-learner relations, what he calls *visible pedagogy* (usually associated with a performance model of pedagogy), but is also exercised in *invisible pedagogy* (usually associated with a competence model of pedagogy), where the hierarchical relationship is implicit and covert. In visible pedagogy, the relationship of authority of the educator over learner is explicit and defined, while in invisible pedagogy, these rules and hierarchical relationships are not absent but are implicit: “power is masked or hidden by devices of communication” (Bernstein, 1990, cited in Sadovnik, 1995: 13). Finally, relations of power are also embedded in the relationship between the *instructional discourse* (knowledge and skills content) and the *regulative*

²⁵ Classification refers to the degree of insulation or strength of boundaries between subjects or disciplines, as well as between the discourse of the education institution and everyday discourse. Framing refers to the degree of control educator and learners possess over the selection, organization, pacing and timing of the knowledge transmitted, as well as relations between educator and learner (Sadovnik, 1995: 10).

discourse – the particular set of norms and values in which it is located (Bernstein, 1996: 28).

Relevance of Durkheim and Bernstein for this study

The Durkheimian/Bernsteinian perspective offers a particular lens through which to view the nature of knowledge and processes of learning within the trade union context. Durkheim stresses the social and collective nature of all knowledge, as well as its projective and visionary potential, both of which will prove important within the trade union context.

These two theorists offer conceptual tools which could help to pose lines of enquiry and provide resources for analysis. For example, one key question arising from within this perspective is: on which side of the ‘knowledge boundary’ – between ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’, or between horizontal and vertical discourses – is knowledge and learning within the trade union context located? Muller has noted that neither the ‘everyday world’ nor the ‘world of science’ are epistemologically homogeneous (2000a: 82) and thus the task here might be to utilise these theoretical languages of description to uncover the different forms of knowledge operating in the trade union context, and the relations of domination/subordination between them. Answering such questions could reveal insights into what it might mean ‘to cross the line’, for example, between forms of knowledge found in the trade union context and those found in formal education.

Breier’s (2003) doctoral thesis focuses precisely on the question of ‘crossing the boundary’ between learning and knowledge in the trade union context, and academic learning and knowledge. Working largely from within a Bernsteinian perspective, she examines the relationship between ‘formal’ and ‘everyday’ knowledge in relation to two South African university courses in labour law. Both courses had RPL procedures in place designed to allow access to trade unionists with limited formal education, but with years of experience as workers and worker leaders.

Breier attempts to draw on Bernstein’s concepts of horizontal and vertical knowledge discourses, but finds it virtually impossible to distinguish between learning that had resulted from prior informal experience and that which resulted from prior formal education: “Once it had been translated into an academically-

acceptable form of language and practice, its origins were no longer clear” (Breier, 2003: 7). In order to identify and analyse the relationship between formal and informal knowledge within these courses, she supplements Bernstein’s concepts with those from Bourdieu and Dowling. In particular, she draws on Dowling’s concepts of ‘localising’ and ‘generalising’ strategies and their many sub-variants.

Breier’s findings are interpreted within the ‘strong boundary’ approach to knowledge, but with a number of modifications. She argues that there is a “... need to recognise distinctions between abstract and concrete thought and knowledge”, but these distinctions are complicated by “the complex interweaving of abstract and concrete in the discourse of both lecturers and learners” (Breier, 2003: 49). She found that trade union students and lecturers legitimized their generalisations in relation to very different sources of authority: local, workers’ knowledge in the case of the former, and written legal reports in the latter. Trade union students and lecturers also used generalisations in different ways, with different trajectories: students used horizontal discourse to ‘pull’ the general rule down to the local level and reveal its inequity, while lecturers elevated the particular beyond its singularity into the realm of the general (Breier, 2003: 219). She also argues that although unionists brought theorised arguments with them into the courses, they tended to be unable to challenge lecturers’ generalizations with alternative generalisations but resorted to their local experiences – a strategy which she argues is not acceptable in this context. Breier’s findings raise numerous curriculum issues which cannot be debated here. However, my thesis will return to some of these issues in the context of my own data presentation and analysis.

Bernstein offers a detailed language of description that – although oriented primarily towards the formal education system – might allow interesting questions to be posed about pedagogic practice within the union context. For example, how is knowledge from other sites/domains recontextualised in this site of practice, and how does this knowledge relate to workers’ ‘everyday’ knowledge? What does pedagogic practice ‘look like’ in this context, and can such practice be classified as visible or invisible pedagogy, competence or performance pedagogy? What might this reveal about relations of power within the trade union, and the

way in which broader, social power relations are challenged or reproduced within this context?

The critiques of Durkheim's and Bernstein's sociology of education suggest, however, that a number of problems in applying their analytical models to the trade union context need to be anticipated. Firstly, both treat the differentiation of knowledge in dichotomous terms (in the case of Bernstein, a number of fractally related dichotomies), and this makes their analyses largely synchronic and static. Young notes that although both Durkheim and Bernstein do recognise the issue of knowledge change, it is not central to their overall sociology of knowledge, and they give little attention to how the relationship between different types of knowledge may change over time. He argues the need for a more historical and dynamic approach to knowledge that can take account of the impact of societal change on knowledge (Young, 2002: 6). For my own research which attempts to trace both continuities and changes in worker education and knowledge over time, this seemed a serious constraint.

Young argues that Bernstein's notion of 'verticality' (in terms of sets of principles hierarchically derived from each other) defines scientific knowledge far more precisely than Durkheim's concept of the 'sacred'. However, while Bernstein's concepts are richly elaborated in relation to knowledge and pedagogy within the formal education system, the domain of the 'everyday' is relatively neglected. As Apple has argued, the "...sense of 'living and experimenting with' is partly truncated in Bernstein. Collective social movements are largely missing as well" (Apple, 1995: 72). In my view, knowledge and pedagogy outside of the formal education context is portrayed over-simplistically as a flat, homogenous terrain, where forms of knowledge and educational practice can only be defined in relation to formal knowledge and pedagogy, and seem incapable and unworthy of study in their own right.

Jean Lave, as part of a broader critique of the conception of 'idealised, rational science', has strongly criticised the 'dualism' she sees as inherent in Bernstein's work. She argues that his are the familiar dichotomous categories which have their origins in 19th century evolutionist studies of 'primitive thought', and have now simply been transposed to the 'everyday thinking' of lower classes (Lave, 1998: 80). The pejorative meaning that is thereby ascribed to 'everyday thought'

is premised on other related dichotomies: between mind and body, intellect and emotion, abstract and concrete, objective and subjective, rational and irrational. The mind-body dichotomy means that:

- emotions are assigned to the negatively valued body;
- immediate sensuous experience is devalued as a source of knowledge;
- higher order cognitive functions are presumed to be far away from intuition, and from concrete, context-embedded experience; and
- a central role is given to explicit verbal discursive practices as the only evidence of knowledge.

These criticisms suggested that it might be problematic to directly apply Bernstein's theory to a study of forms of pedagogy and knowledge which have already in his schema – according to Lave – been assigned lesser value than 'formal' knowledge and pedagogy.

A final concern was that my area of focus – the trade union movement – has been one of the most significant 'change agents' in South Africa, and this thesis would need to try to capture the transformatory potential of workers' knowledge and learning in this context. Although Bernstein often refers to the potential of education to produce creative subjects and thus to create the possibility of change, the possibilities of this process are still underdeveloped in his work. Sadovnik has argued that:

we need to develop a more systematic theory of educational transformation that looks at the radical potential of pedagogic practices. That is, we must construct a dialectical model to account for how the same processes that reproduce social order through symbolic control have the potential to create the possibility of change (Sadovnik, 1995: 25).

In the light of these criticisms, I felt that insights into knowledge and learning in the trade union context might be gained from other bodies of theory.

The ‘no-boundary’ or ‘multiple boundary’ approaches to the sociology of knowledge

There is a range of different theoretical approaches to learning and knowledge that specifically avoids drawing strong boundaries between ‘formal and ‘everyday’ knowledges, and in some cases draws no boundaries at all between different kinds of knowledge. Two main bodies of theory will be discussed here, each on account of their heuristic value to the study of learning, pedagogy and knowledge within a trade union organisational context: Experiential Learning theories and Situated Learning theories.

Experiential learning theories

The relationship between experience, learning and knowledge has been one of the most significant areas for research and practice in adult education. Theories of Experiential Learning (Schön, 1983; Kolb, 1984; Boud, 1990; Mezirow, 1991; Boud, Cohen and Walker, 1993) have been used to make sense of learning and knowledge production across multiple sites both within and outside of formal education. Although different contents and contexts of learning and knowledge are acknowledged, ‘experience’ is seen as a continuous thread which weaves itself through all these contexts. Experiential Learning theorists are some of the key protagonists of an epistemology that stresses the essential similarity and continuity of forms of knowledge.

Experiential Learning approaches have had a deep influence on non-formal education in South Africa, including trade union education (Cooper and Qotole, 1996) as well as the movement of ‘popular education’ in South Africa in the 1980s (Nekhwevha, 2002). Embedded in theories of experiential learning is the assumption that the role of people’s experience in learning and knowledge production should be celebrated and legitimated. Amongst those Experiential Learning theorists rooted in a radical, ‘critical pedagogy’ perspective (Freire 1970, 1976) the erosion of knowledge boundaries is seen as an explicit goal and the use of experience in learning constitutes “one way to resist the authority of technical disciplinary knowledge”, and to counter the undervaluing of experiential knowing (Fenwick, 2003: 9).

Experiential Learning theories have been an important resource for those writing about learning in informal educational contexts, particularly those promoting social transformation. According to Fenwick, the dominant tradition of experiential learning is an individualised, phenomenological one in which all theories share the same basic conceptualisation of learning:

an independent learner, cognitively reflecting on concrete experience to construct new understandings, perhaps with the assistance of an educator, towards some social goal of progress or improvement (Fenwick, 2003: 12).

Individuals are viewed as actively constructing their own knowledge through interaction with their environment, rather than passively absorbing already-existing concepts.

This grouping of theorists has succeeded in placing ‘experience’ at the centre of adult learning, and has challenged the dominant epistemology of the 20th century which excludes a role for subjective experience in knowledge construction. However, their theoretical approach has been the subject of numerous critiques. Firstly, Experiential Learning theories have been criticized for their failure to acknowledge the power relations at the center of pedagogy. Writers such as Usher and Edwards (1995) and Usher and Solomon (1999), working from the poststructuralist ideas of Michel Foucault, have argued that the experiential learning discourse can itself be oppressive and disempowering. Usher and Edwards criticise ‘confessional’ educational practices such as journaling or portfolios, while Usher and Solomon draw on Foucault’s notion of governmentality to criticise the way in which workers’ experiential learning is governed by human resources management practices in the workplace. Methchild Hart (1992) too has written extensively and critically on how worker’s experiential learning is reduced to human capital with potential economic benefits to economic enterprises.

These reflection-oriented theories of experiential learning have also been accused of dualism, although of a different kind to that of Bernstein. Michelson (1996a and b, 1998, 1999) has criticised an understanding of reflection-on-experience which, by requiring the ‘reflector’ to step back from his/her experience in order to analyse it dispassionately, creates an unnatural split between thinking and action, mind and body, and individual and context. She traces this epistemological

'dismemberment' of mind and body back to Descartes and other Enlightenment proponents of what she and other feminist writers have termed 'abstract masculinity', where the body and those activities most associated with the maintenance of the body, are rendered invisible.

The key characteristic of abstract masculinity is detachment from whatever ties the knower to a contextualised human life: emotions, loyalties and interests, memories, responsibilities to others (Michelson, 1998: 218).

She cites Dorothy Smith who argues that:

modernist knowledge-practices replicate that same division of labour; the idealised mode of disembodied, context-independent contemplation is predicated on a social organisation in which others function in the concrete, particular, and bodily modes in a way that supports but does not interfere with the conceptual mode (Smith, 1987, cited in Michelson, 1998: 220).

As a consequence of this positivist, empiricist treatment of experience, the 'located' knowledge of women, workers or 'people of colour' is marginalised by being coded as biased and distorted and seen as something to be transcended, rather than as a source of truth/knowledge in itself (Michelson, 1998: 227).

According to this argument, Experiential Learning theories, like the 'dualists', construct a binary between different forms of knowledge on the basis that rational, cognitive thought is epistemologically superior to embodied, interested, experiential knowledge. Critics of Experiential Learning theory also argue that it focuses on the individual and neglects the collective, social dimensions of learning, and over-separates the individual learner from his/her social context. 'Context' is seen as a static space surrounding the individual rather than an integral part of knowledge construction (Fenwick, 2003).

Finally, Experiential Learning theorists have been criticized for treating the notion of 'experience' unproblematically, suggesting that through reflection the learner can uncover the 'true' meaning of his/her experience. Critical, feminist and post-modernist theorists such as Brah and Hoy (1989), Wildemeersch (1992), Usher (1992), Michelson (1996a, 1996b, 1998) and Brookfield (1998) have all argued in different ways that 'experience' is never 'innocent'; it is always located historically, socially and materially where it both reflects and reproduces social relations and social practices. Neither is our experience entirely transparent: it is

affected by our positioning within hierarchies of power, and “ ... enters our consciousness already organised by ideologies, languages and material histories....” (Michelson, 1996b: 190). Of particular importance to the traditions of radical pedagogy are warnings that we need to be wary of ‘experiential foundationalism’ (Harding, 1991: 269), and of essentialist notions that “some social positions have greater access to the truth” on account of their direct experience of oppression and exploitation (Avis, 1995: 177). Adult education literature on post-modernism (Usher, 1992; Usher, Bryant and Johnston, 1997; Edwards and Usher, 2000) has focused attention on the increasing dislocation of experience in the era of globalisation, where people have become multiply-located in spaces mapped by class, race, gender, sexuality, age, culture, religion and language.

Having grappled with these critiques, it was evident that what is needed for the study of learning in a trade union organisational environment is an approach which recognises the collective dimensions of learning, which focuses on organisational involvement as a key element in learning, and which provides a means of understanding the impact of context on learning. It seemed that the Situated Learning approaches could offer such a perspective on learning.

Learning in ‘communities of practice’

The Situated Learning theories offer a way to begin looking at the “vast body of unused, wasted, suppressed, denied knowledge” that exists within the workers’ movement (Grossman, 1999: 4). The point of departure for Lave and Wenger (1991) and other Situated Learning theorists (Rogoff, 1984; Chaiklin and Lave 1993; Lave 1996; Lave, 1998; Wenger 1998) is their critique of theories of cognition and learning which are “... concerned with individual differences, with notions of better and worse, more and less learning, and with comparison of these things across groups-of-individuals” (Lave, 1996: 149). These theories reflect and contribute to a “politics by which disinherited and disenfranchised individuals, whether taken one at a time or in masses, are identified as the dis-abled, and thereby made responsible for their ‘plight’”. Lave continues: “ It seems imperative to explore ways of understanding learning that do not naturalize and underwrite divisions of social inequality in our society” (Lave, 1996: 149).

As mentioned earlier, Lave and Wenger have criticised the empiricism, the ‘abstract individualism’ and the ‘dualisms’ inherent in much ‘rationalist’ cognitive theory, and proposed alternative perspectives on key phenomena. They have argued that Western ‘rationality’ cannot be used uncritically as the basis of explanation in cognitive science; rationality itself needs to be the object of interrogation and explanation. What they term the ‘folk epistemology of dichotomies’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 104) – for example, between abstract and concrete knowledge – is not about real categories that reside in the world as distinct forms of knowledge, but rather about categories that are constructed by a particular form of (western, scientific) cultural practice.

What makes Lave and Wenger’s work conceptually useful for my purposes is their foregrounding of learning rather than transmission/teaching, and their conception of *learning as social practice*. They view learning as a feature of practice, something which might be present in all sorts of activities, not only those recognised as ‘training’ or ‘education’ events.

Introducing the notion of learning in communities of practice, Lave argues that:

learning is an aspect of changing participation in changing “communities of practice” everywhere. Wherever people engage for substantial periods of time, day by day, in doing things in which their ongoing activities are interdependent, learning is part of their changing participation in changing practices (1996: 150).

A community of practice is not necessarily a well-defined, identifiable group, with socially visible boundaries. It is “... an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities” (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 98).

Because learning is an integral part of social practice, the study of learning needs to focus on what people *do* – at different times, and in different places:

who you are becoming shapes crucially and fundamentally what you ‘know’. ‘What you know’ may be better thought of as doing rather than having something – ‘knowing’ rather than acquiring or accumulating knowledge or information. ‘Knowing’ is a relation among communities of practice, participation in practice, and the generation of identities as part of becoming part of ongoing practice (1996: 157).

Lave points out that ethnographic methodologies are therefore a good way to come to understand learning as part of practice, and that the focus should be on learners' direct experience and changing ways of participating (Lave, 1996: 162).

For Lave and Wenger, a central feature of learning is 'legitimate peripheral participation':

learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners ... (where) the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community. 'Legitimate peripheral participation' provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 29).

The partial participation of newcomers is a way of their gaining access to resources for understanding through growing involvement.

Wenger's later (1998) work on communities of practice extends, elaborates and refines these concepts. He introduces the notion of a community of practice acting as a "locally negotiated regime of competence" and thus knowledge (or 'knowing' rather) is "what would be recognized as competent participation in the practice" (1998: 137). He also stresses that practice involves experiencing the world meaningfully, or 'negotiating meaning'.

There are a number of additional features about learning within the Situated Learning perspective that seemed of potential value to this study:

- Learning is essentially a *collective* process. "Learning is, as it were, distributed among co-participants, not a one-person act" (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 15). As Wenger puts it:

Mutual engagement involves not only our competence, but also the competence of others. It draws on what we do and what we know, as well as on our ability to connect meaningfully to what we don't do and what we don't know – that is, to the contributions and knowledge of others (Wenger, 1998: 76).

- Learning is embedded in *rules of practice* that reflect the collective values of the community of practice, as well as its social relations.
- Learning is intimately bound up with *identity construction*. Lave and Wenger write: "... identity is central to the careers of newcomers in communities of

practice, and thus fundamental to the concept of legitimate peripheral participation” (1991: 115). As newcomers become old-timers, their changing knowledge, skill and discourse signals the development of a new identity (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 122). Identity therefore needs to be viewed as a form of competence.

- Learning is seen as having both *explicit and tacit* dimensions (reminiscent of James Gee’s (1990) distinction between ‘learning’ and ‘acquisition’²⁶). Lave has questioned the central role given to explicit verbal instruction in functionalist learning theory, and has argued that verbal, discursive processes do not constitute the exclusive condition of knowledge (Lave, 1998: 182). Furthermore, practice, which often embodies tacit knowledge, should not be viewed as inherently unreflective (Wenger, 1998: 48).
- Learning is a *two-way process*. Participation in social communities shapes the experience of participants, but participants also shape those communities. “The transformative potential of participation goes both ways” (Wenger, 1998: 56- 57). Thus change is a fundamental property of communities of practice.
- Learning is always *historically located*, and reflects historical continuities and discontinuities. Communities of practice are always an encounter between generations, and a repository of ‘shared histories of learning’ (Wenger, 1998: 86). Patterns of participation implicate both remembering and forgetting, and are themselves sources of both continuity and discontinuity (Wenger, 1998: 90).

Situated Learning theory redefines the roles of educator and learner. Rather than the traditional teacher-learner dyad, this perspective points to a “richly diverse field of essential actors” who all play a role in the learning process. In many communities of practice there is very little observable teaching, the community of practice itself constitutes the ‘curriculum’, and resources for learning are drawn

²⁶ For Gee, *learning* is a process that involves “conscious knowledge gained through teaching ... or through certain life-experiences that trigger conscious reflection”, while *acquisition* is a process of “acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models, a process of trial and error, and practice within social groups, without formal teaching” (Gee, 1990: 146).

from a variety of sources all of which assist newcomers to become absorbed in the 'culture of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 93-5).

This perspective offers a new way of viewing 'teaching' and 'learning'. Rogoff (1984) has proposed the concept of 'guided participation' to refer to the processes and people who assist newcomers to become full members of communities of practice. Guided participation may be tacit or explicit, face-to-face or distal; it may involve familiar or unfamiliar people, peers as well as experts, and goals which are explicit, implicit or emerging. This concept offers a distinctive definition of 'pedagogy':

It includes deliberate attempts to instruct and incidental comments or actions that are overheard or seen as well as involvement with particular materials and experiences that are available, which indicate the direction in which people are encouraged to go or discouraged from going (Rogoff, 1984: 147).

Rogoff also offers a definition of 'learning': she proposes the concept of 'participatory appropriation' to refer to the process whereby individuals undergo change through their participation in a community of practice. She argues that the term 'appropriation' – in contrast to the term 'internalization' – avoids a notion of learning as something static which is taken across a boundary from the external to the internal, and instead, affords learning an active, dynamic character: "Instead of studying individuals' possession or acquisition of a capacity or a bit of knowledge, the focus is on the active changes involved in an unfolding event or activity in which people participate" (Rogoff, 1984: 151).

The Situated Learning perspective challenges the notion that knowledge can be divided into two, opposing categories of 'scientific' and 'everyday': "... it is not just the informal side of life that (is) composed of intricately context-embedded and situated activity: there is nothing else" (Lave, 1996: 155). There is no kind of knowledge that can be distinguished by its 'de-contextualisation' or 'abstractness':

Even so-called general knowledge only has power in specific circumstances. Generality is often associated with abstract representations, with decontextualization. But abstract representations are meaningless unless they can be made specific to the situation at hand. Moreover, the formation or acquisition of an abstract principle is itself a specific event in specific circumstances (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 33-4).

This does not imply that all knowledge is the same – “there are enormous differences in what and how learners come to shape (and be shaped into) their identities with respect to different practices” (Lave, 1996: 161) – but that all knowledge is always situated and historically specific.

The Situated Learning theorists also question the idea that the production of new knowledge is limited to certain kinds of practices while others merely reproduce existing knowledge. Lave and Wenger (1991) analyse different forms of apprenticeship, ranging from Mexican Yucatec midwives, to American meat cutters and members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Based on this research, Lave argues that the ‘informally’ educated not only reproduce existing practice but can also produce new knowledge (1996: 152).

Relevance of the Situated Learning perspective to the trade union context

Ball (2003) is the only writer who has applied the notion of ‘community of practice’ to research trade union education. He has pointed to the usefulness of this concept in the trade union context where “members are joined together, as a community, and their shared identity and perspective are generated *through their engagement in their primary practice*” (Ball, 2003: 301, emphasis in original). He has argued that it may be appropriate to consider trade union activity as a whole (both within and across different trade unions) as engagement in a common ‘community of practice’, with trade union education per se as only one part of that practice.

The literature on adult learning has historically failed to embrace the experience of trade union learners (Ball, 2003: 296) or the learning and knowledge of workers more generally. Situated Learning theory, with its self-conscious focus on practices considered not worthy of study as instances of learning and knowledge, offers many conceptual resources that could be useful to a study of learning in a trade union context. Its focus is on learning in any context or organisation – not only within institutions with a dedicated educational purpose. This perspective foregrounds learning rather than teaching, and provides new definitions that make it possible to study forms of learning that are discursive or non-discursive, and forms of pedagogy which are deliberate or incidental, embodied in people or in

processes, technologies or actions. Situated Learning theory captures the collective dimension of learning and the close relationship between learning, identity construction and values, all of which are important in the trade union context. Learning is seen as dynamic, continually evolving, and mutually constituted by people in interaction with their environment.

However, there are a number of potential problems inherent in this theoretical perspective. Fenwick has pointed to some of these. For example, truth claims become problematic in Situated Learning theory because knowledge is judged not by what is 'true' or 'false' but simply by what is *relevant* or useful to a particular situation (Fenwick, 2003: 23). Another problem relates to how to conceptualise the transfer of knowledge or skill from one context to another, if every context is totally unique (Fenwick, 2003: 41).

Hasan argues that a social learning theory needs to account for the positioning of, and social relations between, those that interact. In other words, given the 'same' context, different groups will not necessarily engage in the 'same' social practices: "the 'same' context could elicit different practices from persons differently positioned [in terms of power – LC]" (Hasan, 2002: 15). Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003: 178) argue that Lave and Wenger's "implicit message is that communities of practice only work well when conflict and inequalities are smoothed over", while Fox (2000) also argues that their theory is weak in addressing power relations within the learning process.

My view is that such problems stem from a basic, underlying ambiguity in the work of the Situated Learning theorists, a tension between a historical materialist orientation and a more symbolic interactionist perspective. In some of Lave and Wenger's earlier work, they locate themselves broadly within the tradition of historical materialism. They acknowledge the influence of theories of "social practice, praxis, activity, and the development of human knowing through participation in an ongoing social world (which) is part of a long Marxist tradition in the social sciences" (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 50). In later work, Lave argues that what is needed is a "historical, dialectical, social practice theory" (Lave, 1996: 150) which will offer a social rather than psychological theory of learning.

However, their actual conceptual model seems to be located more within the phenomenological and symbolic interactive sociological traditions which “question the validity of descriptions of social behavior based on the enactment of prefabricated codes and structures. Instead, the focus on actors’ productive contributions to social order has led naturally to a greater role for negotiation, strategy, and unpredictable aspects of action” (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 16). As a result of straddling these two paradigms, their analysis does not fully do justice to either history or ‘situatedness’.

One consequence of this is that although Lave and Wenger do acknowledge the dynamics of power that are likely to arise within a community of practice, in particular between ‘old-timers’ and ‘new-comers’²⁷, they do not provide a means for analysing how broader, historical and structural relations of power at a societal level (based on race, class, gender, language or culture) might reverberate within the dynamics of any community of practice (something Bernstein’s work attempts to do). So, for example, Lave’s studies of Liberian tailors or 19th century mosque schools in Egypt (Lave, 1996) – while presenting rich and nuanced accounts of learning in and through a community of practice – do not interrogate how class-based and gendered social divisions and identities are reproduced in these communities.

A critical perspective on power relations based on class, gender or race is also noticeably absent in Wenger’s (1998) major case study of a workplace-based community of practice, and perhaps accounts for why his work has been so readily taken up in the business literature on organisational and strategic learning. As Fenwick (2003: 48) points out, this literature is “unapologetically rooted in a belief that learning should advance organizational goals of competition, a position to which many adult educators are ideologically opposed.”²⁸ On a related point, Fenwick has also argued that certain communities of practice such as workplaces

²⁷ For example, Lave and Wenger refer to a ‘major contradiction’ between ‘continuity’ and ‘displacement’ inherent in all communities of practice, as well as conflicts which arises out of a situation where ‘differing viewpoints and common stakes are in interplay’ (1991: 114-6) and those inherent in the formation of identities (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 57). See also pages 36, 86 and 103.

²⁸ See also Wenger’s web site: <http://www.ewenger.com/weprospectus.html>

tend to “conserve, protect, and recycle their knowledge, not critically challenge and extend it”, and asks:

The situative perspective also seems silent on the issue of resistance in communities where tools and activities may be unfair or dysfunctional. Is such resistance also considered meaningful participation? (2003: 51).

Given that issues of power, resistance and struggles to transform fundamental power relations in society are so central to the trade union’s existence, the apparent silence in Situated Learning theory on how ‘macro’ power relations are translated into the ‘micro’ power relations within communities of practice (and vice versa), weaken its heuristic value to my study. I therefore sought an approach which would put issues of power back at the center, but which could also avoid the dualist and ‘static’ approach of Bernstein.

A dialectical approach to the relationship between formal and informal knowledge

Both Bernstein and the Situated Learning theorists were influenced by the Russian theorist, Vygotsky, whose work considerably predated that of both (Inghilleri, 2002: 471)²⁹. However, my discussion of Vygotsky in the latter part of this chapter is in keeping with its overall structure which aims to show how my own conceptual development took place, and how my understanding developed in interaction with my data collection and emerging analysis. A focus on the work of Vygotsky was an outcome of my concerns over the dualistic features of Bernstein’s work, and dissatisfaction with the lack of consideration of power relations, resistance and struggle within the Situated Learning perspective. In many respects, a Vygotskian perspective was to prove capable of making better meaning of what was beginning to emerge through my data, and acted as a bridge between the structuralism of Bernstein, and the symbolic interactionism of the Situated Learning theorists.

²⁹ Bernstein writes: "I first came across Vygotsky in the late 1950s through a translation by Luria of a section of *Thought and Speech* published in *Psychiatry* 2 in 1939. It is difficult to convey the sense of excitement, of thrill, of revelation that this paper aroused. Literally, a new universe opened." (in Foreword to Daniels, 1993: xxiii).

Vygotskian perspectives

It is appropriate to start this section with a quote that places Vygotsky's own work in socio-historical perspective:

Vygotsky is one of those figures in intellectual history who might have never been. Had he lived in another time or place, it is unlikely that he would have developed his theoretical approach to psychology. The milieu that proved so supportive was provided by the intellectual and social ferment following the 1917 Revolution (Wertsch, 1985: 1).

Wertsch goes on to argue that in the period of intellectual excitement and creativity following the Russian Revolution, Vygotsky and his colleagues laid the theoretical foundation for an approach that had a powerful impact on Soviet psychology. With translations of his work into English since the 1960s, Vygotsky's ideas have had a significant impact on educational theory in Britain and the United States, and have been developed further by a number of different post-Vygotskian approaches.

Wertsch has argued that Vygotsky owed an intellectual debt to Marxism in a number of respects: in particular, in his method, but also in his claims about the nature of human activity and the social origins of psychological processes (Wertsch, 1985: 5). Vygotsky saw historical analysis as the key to his system: "(T)he historical research of behavior is not an additional or auxiliary aspect of theoretical study but forms the very basis of the latter" (Scribner, 1997: 242). Higher mental processes do not originate in biological evolution but in history.

In keeping with an historical materialist approach, Vygotsky's key interest was in how natural human *activity* serves a major impetus for learning; in fact, learning can be understood as activity. Furthermore, learning is a social and culturally-based activity, with social interaction, social history, experience and culture all playing a major role in the education process. One of the key tools or symbols of social history is language, which serves as a critical organising principle for our experiences (Glassman, 2001). Daniels's view is that Vygotsky's notion of 'social' was not about the interpersonal dimension (as with symbolic interactionists), but rather about human behaviour being viewed as a social product of historical development (Daniels, 2001: 86).

Vygotsky introduced two new concepts associated with teaching and learning. He used the notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) to signal that learning is always an ongoing realisation of potential, and the notion of *mediation* to describe the role of both people as well as artefacts that assist the learner to appropriate the cultural tools developed through social history. Mediating artefacts include socio-cultural tools, and language in particular (Vygotsky, 1978: 52-55). Vygotsky emphasised that mediation always takes place through activity and with other people in socio-cultural settings. During mediation the learner not only internalizes cultural tools and rules but also engages in “creative externalization” (Hasan, 2002). Thus like the Situated Learning theorists, Vygotsky envisages the change that comes about as a result of learning as a two-way process.

There are two kinds of culture that are engaged during the process of mediation: that which emerges through and is associated with ‘everyday’ concepts, and that which emerges through scientific concepts. Vygotsky tended to associate the development of scientific concepts with school learning or at least with formal instruction, although Young argues that his analysis does not exclude the possibility that scientific concepts can be acquired in other contexts (Young, 2002: 32). While Young maintains that Vygotsky's primary emphasis was on the limitations of everyday concepts (Young, 2002: 30), Daniels argues that Vygotsky “was keen to point out the relative strengths of both [everyday and scientific concepts – LC] as they both contributed to each other” (Daniels, 2001: 53).

Although Vygotsky, like Durkheim and Bernstein, makes a distinction between scientific and ‘everyday’ knowledges, he approaches this distinction very differently, insisting that *both* forms of knowledge, as well as the relationship between the two need to be located historically (Young, 2002; Daniels, 2001: 45). Whereas Durkheim locates the origins of theoretical knowledge in the shared rituals and beliefs that brought people together in ‘primitive’ societies, Vygotsky locates the origins of conceptual thought in people's productive interaction with the natural world:

Science for Vygotsky was not a distinct theoretical activity that involved developing unobservable, socially shared concepts, as it was for Durkheim; it was an integral part of the way man (sic) appropriates nature in history (Young, 2002: 44-5).

In contrast to dualist approaches, it was not the difference between these two forms of knowledge that was as important to Vygotsky as the *relationship between the two* in the processes of learning. According to Vygotsky, this process involved ‘moving from the abstract to the concrete’, and vice versa; it is this interaction between scientific and ‘everyday’ knowledge that lies at the heart of learning within the zone of proximal development (Guile and Young, 1998a). Daniels argues that Vygotsky’s emphasis on the interdependence between the development of scientific and everyday concepts is not always properly appreciated:

Vygotsky argued that the systematic, organised and hierarchical thinking that he associated with scientific concepts becomes gradually embedded in everyday referents and thus achieves a general sense in the contextual richness of everyday thought.... Similarly he argued that everyday thought is given structure and order in the context of systematic scientific thought (Daniels, 2001: 53).

Thus scientific concepts are not assimilated in a ready-made or pre-packaged form; the two forms of concept are brought into a relationship within which they *both* develop (Daniels, 2001: 54). The ZPD is the crucial space where complex interactions between scientific and ‘everyday’ knowledge takes place (Young and Guile, 1998a: 3).

According to Young, we need to see:

(Vygotsky’s) science/common sense distinction not as a dichotomy but as internally related concepts located both in history and in the process of individual learning and development. This approach offers an alternative to the a-historicism that characterises Durkheim’s and Bernstein’s analyses (Young, 2002: 33).

Vygotsky thus offers a ‘dialectical alternative’ to the a-historical and static dualisms of Durkheim and Bernstein (Young, 2002: 23, Daniels, 2001: 36).

Post-Vygotskian perspectives

There are a number of writers who draw on a Vygotskian approach to learning and knowledge that have relevance to this study. Daniels points out that Vygotsky’s theory can provide grounds for very different, if not opposing, epistemologies and pedagogies. Vygotsky’s distinction between scientific and ‘everyday’ knowledge has been interpreted broadly in two different ways by post-

Vygotskians. While one grouping has tended to lay stress on the principle of insulation between theoretical knowledge and common sense³⁰, the other has continued to develop notions of the interrelationships between them in the processes of learning (Young, 2002: 32). Consideration here will be given to two prominent post-Vygotskian theorists because of their relevance to my study. Both Scribner and Engeström fit into the category stressing the interrelationships between different forms of learning, and both have focused on describing and analysing the processes of knowledge production and learning involving workers in the workplace.

Scribner: Knowledge ‘at work’

Scribner (1997) is regarded as one of the most important post-Vygotskian activity theorists. Like Lave, Wenger and Rogoff, she carried out research on ‘everyday’ knowledge and of particular relevance to this thesis, on work activities. However, contrary to the Situated Learning theorists who see all knowledge as equally situated and diverse, it is Scribner’s view that ‘knowledge at work’ is distinctive, at least in comparison with formal schooling:

(H)uman intellect is not only universal in its capacities, but diverse in its ways of functioning. After years of probing, psychologists and anthropologists have discerned some patterns in this diversity – *patterns that reflect the impact of particular social institutions and practices* (Scribner, 1997: 298, emphasis added).

She and her colleagues conducted a major body of research on what is termed ‘thinking at work’. She argued that the industrial production system is an ideal site of research on learning as it epitomizes the interconnections of individual, societal and historical processes (Scribner, 1997: 292)³¹. Her research strategy was to study ‘mind in action’ through naturalist observation in the context of naturally-occurring activities, on the basis of the argument that: “If skill systems are activity or practice-dependent, one way to determine their characteristics and course of acquisition is to study them as they function in these practices” (Scribner, 1997: 299).

³⁰ These include Bernsteinian scholars such as Hasan and Daniels; see Hasan (2002) and Daniels (2000).

³¹ In fact, her studies were considerably narrower than what is suggested here, and tended to reduce workers’ learning to workplace skills development.

Many of her key findings support the critiques of traditional epistemologies that emphasise dualisms and dichotomies. Key features of ‘thinking at work’ are variability and flexibility involving not only problem solution but problem formation. Of particular value to this study was her insight that over generations, the experience of thousands of people in any industry produces an environment that supports intelligent organisation of work. This *organised social knowledge* is embodied in the physical and symbolic environment of the workplace. In other words, the environment is a part of the problem solving system rather than an external ‘envelope’. People use each other and practical and symbolic tools to ‘achieve intelligent action’ (Scribner, 1997: 329).

Engeström: ‘Breakthrough into learning activity’

Engeström’s key emphasis is on the dialectical logic in Vygotsky’s work. He argues that the problem with conventional logic is that it is based on abstract dichotomies, and the problem with dichotomies is that they leave no room for something new to emerge: “they depict movement as mechanical opposition... between two fixed poles – thus effectively excluding the dimension of concrete historical development” (Engeström, 2002: 7).

A dialectical understanding of concept formation is that concepts arise out of the interplay of forces involved in productive activity (material or symbolic). The development of concepts is not confined to that activity known as science, but can emerge out of any activity³². Engeström quotes Il’enkov:

It stands to reason that the universal laws of thought are the same both in the scientific and so-called everyday thinking. But they are easier to discern in scientific thought.... (Engeström, 2002: 19).

In fact, in the process of concept formation, ‘science’ and ‘everyday knowledge’ are in dynamic interrelation with one another. This means that everyday thinking has, in principle, the same theoretical potential as the consciously elaborated concepts of science.

Engeström’s own research on learning has a transformatory orientation: he is concerned with the creative side of human activity, and its ability not only to reproduce culture, but also to transform it. Engeström argues that today: “...

³² Learning itself is a productive activity – an activity productive of new meaning.

people face not only the challenge of acquiring established culture; they also face situations in which *they must formulate desirable culture*” (Engeström, 1999: 35, emphasis added).

For Engeström, activity is not reducible to actions; while actions are relatively short-lived, activity is a collective, systemic formation that evolves over lengthy periods of historical time, often taking the form of institutions and organisation (Daniels, 2001: 86). Cognition also needs to be understood as a collective process, as ‘distributed’ within the activity system (Engeström, 1999).

In contrast with Lave and Wenger, Engeström is concerned not so much with the slow evolution of practice over long periods of time, but rather with resistance, struggle and transformation of activity networks. Engeström proposes the idea of networks of activity systems within which instability (internal tensions), struggles and contradictions are the ‘motive force of change and development’ (quoted in Daniels, 2001: 91). Activity systems are always multi-voiced, comprising multiple points of view, traditions and interests some of which arise out of the division of labour inherent in every activity system:

The division of labour in an activity creates different positions for the participants, the participants carry their own diverse histories, and the activity system itself carries multiple layers and strands of history engraved in its artifacts, rules and conventions. The multi-voicedness... is a source of trouble and a source of innovation, demanding actions of translation and negotiation (quoted in Daniels, 2001: 94).

Engeström distinguishes between contradictions on the one hand and problems or conflicts on the other, and it is the former in which he is most interested. Contradictions are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems, linked to the broader social division of labour, and are the key source of change and development.

Each activity system holds the possibility of expansive transformation, that is, substantial qualitative change. When contradictions are aggravated, participants begin to question and deviate from its established norms, and this escalates into a deliberate, collective change effort, what Engeström calls “breakthrough into learning activity” (Engeström, 2002: 41) and which he likens to “working at the edge of competence” (Engeström, 1991b: 256). The essence of this learning

activity which is at the heart of science and art, is that activity is able to “ ... ‘go beyond the given’, not in the privacy of the individual mind but in public, material objectifications” (Engeström, 2002: 51). This ‘imaginative praxis’ involves *breaking out of the given context*, and constitutes the ‘highest’ form of learning³³ (Engeström, 2002: 8-10). This process involves collectively producing new understandings and hence new knowledge.

Engeström's empirical studies on the social transformation of the organisation of work (1991a and 1999)³⁴ have been concerned with how activities – as societal systemic formations – develop and change. He argues that his findings show that by critically interrogating their work contexts, individuals and groups collectively produce new understanding and knowledge. A key condition of this is that participants feel able to question, criticise or reject some aspects of accepted practice and existing wisdom.

Usefulness of Vygotskian/post-Vygotskian framework for this study

Vygotsky's notion of a dialectical relationship between ‘everyday’ and scientific forms of knowledge offer a way out of some of the problems inherent in both Bernstein's and the Situated Learning perspectives. It provides a means to recognise that not all knowledge is the same, and that there are historical/contextual patterns in different forms of knowledge. At the same time, the dialectical framework allows different categories of knowledge to be viewed not as static opposites, but in dynamic interaction with each other.

Methodologically, Vygotsky's approach emphasises the need to investigate knowledge and learning not only in a socially situated way, but also historically. In addition, it points to the need to relate patterns of learning and knowledge not

³³ Engeström sees Level I Learning as essentially reproductive; Level II learning as theoretical development which addresses given, defined problems; and Level III Learning as the construction and application of a new world outlook (akin to Kuhn's ‘paradigm shift’) (Engeström, 2002: 6-9).

³⁴ These involved the transformation of Health Centres in Finland (Engeström, 1991a) and learning in work teams (Engeström, 1999). He adopted an ‘interventionist’ approach in this research where researchers engaged in “forming societally new artefacts and forms of practice jointly with their subjects” (Engeström, 1999: 36).

only to micro-level power relations, but also to broader social divisions in society, in particular those related to the division of labour in processes of production.

A number of post-Vygotskians have elaborated on Vygotsky's notion of 'mediation tools', and how these tools (for example, forms of language or types of technology) reflect broader social relations of power. Scribner's research points to the potential of the organisational context itself to mediate historically accumulated knowledge, while Engeström emphasises that learning is not only about knowledge reproduction but also about *transforming* knowledge and culture – a key dimension of the trade union's engagement at the workplace as well as in capitalist society more generally.

As with all theorists, Vygotsky has been the subject of critiques. Daniels argues that Vygotsky failed to develop a detailed approach that would allow for the empirical investigation of the consequences of different configurations of power and control either at the social interactional or institutional level (Daniels, 2000: 63). He argues that Bernstein, who works between social structure and local interaction, provides a more sophisticated and 'delicate' model of different kinds of pedagogic discourses, and provides a means to examine the ways in which different forms of pedagogy might be related to social power structures (Daniels, 2000: 134).

Wertsch, one of the leading post-Vygotskians, agrees that Vygotsky did not succeed in providing a genuinely socio-cultural approach to the study of the mind; in particular, he did not spell out how specific historical, cultural and institutional settings are tied to various forms of mediated action. He sees the work of the Russian literary theorist, Bakhtin, as providing some of the conceptual resources needed to analyse the "sociocultural situatedness of mediated action" (Wertsch, 1991: 47).

Bakhtin: viewing 'everyday' knowledge as a site of resistance, subversion and a source of 'utopian impulse'

It is Wertsch's interest in how speech acts as a cultural tool in mediating learning that leads him to consider the work of Bakhtin on speech acts and utterances.

Wertsch draws on Bakhtin's notions of 'social languages'³⁵ to show how different forms of language and speech are differentially imbued with power and authority, and how certain forms of speech privilege particular ways of thinking in certain settings and silence others (Wertsch, 1991: 46-78). He points to Bakhtin's notions of 'hybrid constructions'³⁶ and 'speech genres'³⁷ (including speeches, stories and songs), and both concepts proved particularly useful in making sense of my emerging data. Also of relevance to my study is Bakhtin's notion of 'ventriloquism', a process where one voice speaks through another voice or voice type (Wertsch, 1991: 59).

According to Morris (1994: 48) Bakhtin's work on language brings together individual consciousness at the micro level, with the whole social arena of meaning production in various ideological fields, and with the process of historical change. Language is closely linked to ideology³⁸, although the two are not synonymous: "The domain of ideology coincides with the domain of signs. They equate with one another. Wherever a sign is present, ideology is present, too. *Everything ideological possesses semiotic value*" (Volsinov, 1929/1994: 51, emphasis in original).

Language is the 'most sensitive index of social change'; in fact, changes in language *anticipate* changes in ideology: "The word is the medium in which occur the slow quantitative accretions of those changes which have not yet achieved the status of a new ideological quality, not yet produced a new and fully-fledged ideological form" (Volsinov, 1929/1994: 54). Speech forms are linked to social power relations, and may be "an arena of the class struggle" (Volsinov, 1929/1994: 55), with the dominant ideology trying to fix the meaning of words in particular ways.

³⁵ "... a discourse peculiar to a specific stratum of society... in a given social system at a given time" (Wertsch, 1991: 57).

³⁶ This is an utterance belonging to one person, but containing mixed within it different speech styles (Wertsch, 1991: 59).

³⁷ Speech genres are language patterns corresponding to "typical situations of speech communication" (Wertsch, 1991: 61).

³⁸ The Russian term, ideology, is less politically coloured than the English equivalent – it is not necessarily a consciously held political belief system, but can refer in a more general sense to a group's world view. (Morris, 1994: 249).

According to Bakhtin, all language is dialogical in that every utterance is always a response to previous utterances and anticipates further utterances, and multivoiced – a complex web of present and past voices from any culture. ‘Dialogicality’, or the different ways that voices come into contact, is fundamental to Bakhtin’s account of human and social processes (Wertsch and Smolka, in Daniels, 1993: 73). All forms of mediation are quintessentially socio-cultural in nature firstly, because they ‘import’ the socio-cultural into the mental (Wertsch and Smolka, in Daniels, 1993: 77), and secondly, because they are never neutral, but always expressive and evaluative (chosen and accented – Morris, 1994: 81) with reference to the anticipated response of the addressee:

The role of ... others ... is not that of passive listeners, but of active participants in speech communication. From the very beginning, the speaker expects a response from them, an active responsive understanding. The entire utterance is constructed, as it were, in anticipation of encountering this response... (Bakhtin, 1965/1994: 87).

Bakhtin distinguished between ‘univocal’ or monologic forms of dialogue which tend towards the integration and unification of meaning, and multi-voiced forms which open the space for multiple and contested meanings. He contrasted forms of ‘dialogic interanimation’ with the “... ‘static and dead’ meaning structure of authoritative discourse (which) allows no interanimation with other voices” (Bakhtin, 1965/1994: 78), and which cannot be represented but only transmitted.

Gardiner (2000) contrasts the earlier linguistic focus of Bakhtin’s work with his later writings on carnival and everyday life where he adopted a more materialist and historical approach, and where his work was more overtly critical and socio-political in character. In particular, Bakhtin critiqued the ‘privileging of the cognitive, incorporeal subject’, and it is this focus that proved of significance to my research.

Gardiner’s study focuses on a number of social theorists, including Bakhtin, Lefebvre and Smith, all of whom he regards as part of a counter-tradition of thinking about everyday life. He contrasts them with the wide variety of ‘microsociologies’ of ethnographic and social interactionist orientation who perceive the everyday as a relatively undifferentiated and “quazi-natural, unalterable” world (Gardiner, 2000: 5). Gardiner argues that for the critical cultural theorists, everyday life ‘does have a history’, is bound up with the

dynamics of modernity and is therefore riven by contradiction and internal complexity. These theorists argue that everyday life must be related analytically to wider socio-historical developments, including the asymmetrical power relations in which it is embedded.

The everyday must therefore be understood dialectically, as simultaneously an alienated and potentially liberated state. One of the key goals of these theorists is to problematise everyday life, to expose its contradictions and tease out its hidden potentialities, and to raise our understanding of the prosaic to the level of critical knowledge:

Whereas for mainstream interpretive approaches the everyday is the realm of the ordinary, the alternative pursued here is to treat it as a domain that is potentially *extraordinary*. The ordinary can become extraordinary not by eclipsing the everyday, or imagining we can arbitrarily leap beyond it to some 'higher' level of cognition or action, but by fully appropriating and activating the possibilities that lie hidden, and typically repressed, within it (Gardiner, 2000: 6).

The everyday world can resist, empower and transform, and it can combat the 'totally administered world' (Gardiner, 2000:15):

Daily life, as Gambacorta observes, represents 'the most obstinate channel of the emergence of resistance, the perception of possibilities, and the reawakening of the conscience' (Gardiner, 2000:15-16).

The critical cultural theorists therefore take an explicitly ethico-political stance, foregrounding the capacity of the individual and the collective to transform existing social conditions. Particularly for Lefebvre and Bakhtin, the human body constitutes a focal point of resistance, because it has an organic vitality that cannot be easily suppressed by rationalised systems. It is the foundation of subversion (Gardiner, 2000:16).

Bakhtin constructed a distinct social philosophy that presumed the importance of the everyday. Co-participation in this everyday world cannot occur solely through the medium of cognitive discursive thought. For Bakhtin, the 'paramount reality' of human beings is our embodied existence within the everyday lifeworld. "Genuinely participative thinking and acting requires an engaged and embodied – in a word, *dialogical* – relation to the other, and to the world at large" (Gardiner, 2000: 54). For Bakhtin, the 'molten lava of events' must be grasped on its own

terms, as an 'experiential and sensuous given'. It is in the concrete deed or 'act' – the 'being-as-event' – that the meaning of human life is constituted (Gardiner, 2000: 47).

Bakhtin theorised the everyday as inextricably intertwined with the carnivalesque, and viewed the body as a key site of resistance. In the 'ceaseless battle' between official and unofficial sociocultural forces, the 'folk-festive' genres of ordinary people "ensure the subversion and dis-unification of the officially sanctioned language system..." (Gardiner, 2000: 61). Carnival illustrates the "boisterous, disruptive and libidinous qualities of popular cultural forms and the collective body" (Gardiner, 2000: 63). The carnivalesque image "brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid" (Bakhtin, quoted in Gardiner, 2000: 65). With its singular qualities such as 'grotesque aesthetic', infringement of boundaries and culture of ambivalence, carnival is an enactment of 'the world turned upside down', and underscores the inevitability of change and transformation:

The carnivalesque functions to reverse the estrangement of humanity from nature.... To re-familiarize human beings with the natural world.... Folk-festive culture, in short, promised a better and happier future, one characterized by material abundance, equality and freedom (Gardiner, 2000: 68).

For Bakhtin, it is important not to fetishise the 'everyday'. It does not contain all that is valuable about human existence and the extensive colonization of the everyday by dominant discourses and practices of power cannot be ignored. But Bakhtin points (as do other theorists in Gardiner's study) to the 'vitality of the utopian impulse' (Gardiner, 2000:17) as it is located within everyday life. Gardiner argues that this is not utopianism as an abstract model of social perfection articulated by intellectuals and social elites (the 'blueprint' paradigm of utopianism) but rather: "... a longing for a different, and better way of living, a reconciliation of thought and life, desire and the real, in a manner that critiques the *status quo* without projecting a full-blown image of what a future society should look like" (Gardiner, 2000:17).

As noted earlier, Michelson (1999) has critiqued theories of experiential learning that view learning "as an experience in rational self-management", a process

which is constituted only when we are able to rise above, and reflect dispassionately, on the ‘messiness’ of experience. She uses Bakhtin’s notion of carnival as the basis of an alternative view: one which “celebrates the sociality of experience and affirms the interplay between the body and the world” (Michelson, 1999: 140). Bakhtin’s contribution to the conceptual task of this thesis is that he enables workers’ speech and collective actions to be viewed not only as sites for learning, but also as potential sites for the production and expression of knowledge about resistance, struggle, and hope for a different future.

Applying a Bakhtinian perspective to workers' knowledge and learning

Bakhtin has been a resource for those wishing to analyse worker education and culture in South Africa. Sitas (1990) has drawn on Bakhtinian notions of the ‘carnavalesque’ specifically to analyse and interpret the mass worker gatherings that were such a dominant feature of the growing South African workers’ movement in the 1980s. He argues that all such gatherings incorporate three modes of communication.

The ‘*defiant or heroic mode*’ of communication in such meetings involves ritual affirmation of identity, comradeship and defiance³⁹. Sitas writes that such meetings are places where “the emotive threads are sown together to create the fabric of mass movements. They affirm and manufacture identities and comradeships. They create the sense of belonging and demonstrate ritually resistance and defiance” (Sitas, 1990: 4). One of the key functions of worker leaders – the ‘person with the megaphone’ or the meeting chairperson – is to “weave these solidarities” (Sitas, 1990); such ‘pedagogues’ need to be talented in movement, rhetoric and song, and to be innovators and improvisors.

Sitas also points to the collective identity-building role of specific speech genres such as the praise poem as a “fertile symbolic resource for the affirmation of identities and comradeships” and for enriching the experience of ‘belonging’ (Sitas, 1990: 6). Other forms of what Sitas describes as ‘performance-language’

³⁹ While Sitas emphasises the ritual or symbolic aspects of defiance, he argues that he is not trying to wish away the potential and actual violence that might or does occur in such gatherings. In South Africa in the 1980s, gatherings that had as their purpose an immediate action: a strike, a defence of the community, and paradoxically funerals, violence could and did break out. But he argues that in most worker gatherings, the militance and defiance was symbolic.

involving the 'politics of athletic gesture' (Sitas, 1990: 10), include propaganda poems in English punctuated with chants, toyi-toyi sequences with quasi-poetic call-and-response vocalisings, and struggle songs, all of which "serve to create solidarities and to strike defiant chords" (Sitas, 1990: 6). Sitas warns against an 'essentialist' interpretation of such performance-genres: they are not some 'pristine form of mass communication' but are always organised, patterned events proscribed by goals and agendas and embedded in power relations (Sitas, 1990: 1).

The second dimension of communication in mass worker meetings is the '*cognitive mode*' which involves discussion, argument and resolution of issues. Those who control the 'stage' also "control the messages, the images and the interpellations" (Sitas, 1990: 1). Here a broader grouping of leaders asks people to settle down, think, discuss, explain, justify, ratify and endorse. This is the mode where 'rational' as opposed to 'symbolic' capital is being exchanged: "The cognitive component of every such gathering is pre-planned, agendas are pre-decided, speakers are identified, issues are ranked and priorities are presented" (Sitas, 1990: 1).

The third, '*festive or carnivalesque mode*' of communication in mass meetings invites workers to 'enjoy' performances, where local talent or dance groups, choir or plays⁴⁰ are used to liven up meetings. Drawing explicitly on Bakhtin, Sitas argues that these gatherings need to be seen as manifestations of *desire* – of what is repressed by the social order and given expression through grotesque humour and carnival-like performance (Sitas, 1990: 6).

Sitas warns against drawing distinctions between such modes too finely, but argues that the distinction between them is useful because each mode defines a different form of competent performance: they demand different forms of participation from people, bear their own oral communication strategies, and elicit different (pre-coded) ways of audience participation (Sitas, 1990:5). In most cases, it is the first two modes which are dominant. The third carnivalesque mode,

⁴⁰ Although intended as entertainment, Sitas argues that worker theatre which expanded considerably in the 1980s also played a 'cognitive' role in mass gatherings, with workers communicating to others their experiences, grievances and struggles in the factory (Sitas, 1990: 8).

however enjoyable, ends up in a subordinate position (Sitas, 1990: 5) perhaps pointing to the primarily didactic rather than 'entertainment' orientation of these events.

Conclusions: a conceptual framework

My task of developing a conceptual framework began with a search for theories that focus on how pedagogy, learning and knowledge vary across contexts, and in particular, theories that had something to say about pedagogy, knowledge and learning in informal, 'everyday', organisational contexts.

While Bernstein provides a rich conceptual language with which to describe different forms of knowledge and pedagogy, the structuralism and dualism inherent in his categorisation of knowledge suggests that his might be too rigid and static a framework for analysing the nature of the knowledge in the trade union context. Situated Learning theorists offer a far more dynamic conceptual framework which lends itself particularly well to the study of informal learning in organisations, and which sees learning as a collective process embedded in practice. However, this perspective neglects issues of structural power and by viewing all forms of knowledge as equally situated, it does not provide a language through which the potentially distinctive nature of knowledge in a trade union context can be described.

Vygotskian perspectives capture the historical and cultural 'situatedness' of knowledge. While containing some of the dualisms apparent in Bernstein's work, Vygotsky provides a means to talk about different kinds of knowledge while viewing them in dynamic interaction with one another. Adopting a dialectical perspective on knowledge allows an openness to different modalities of knowledge and to the potentially complex ways that different kinds of knowledge might articulate within the trade union context.

Bakhtin's work offers a way of looking at the 'everyday' as a site of 'hidden potential', and his conceptual resources help to provide insights into rich oral and performative cultures of learning and knowledge.

In this thesis, I draw on these four bodies of theory in a complementary way. In seeking to understand learning, pedagogy and knowledge within the union context, I draw selectively on:

- Bernstein's classificatory power: in particular, his conceptual language to describe different forms of pedagogy and knowledge, and his notions of boundaries and specialisation – all of which imply power relations;
- The Situated Learning theorists' sensitivity to context and their notion of learning as social practice in the collective, interactional context of a community of practice;
- Vygotsky's dialectical approach to knowledge and his notion of the key role of culturally- and historically-embedded tools of mediation;
- Bakhtin's concepts of dialogicality and multivoicedness, his notion of 'carnival' as a transgression of social boundaries, and his notion of the 'everyday' as simultaneously an alienated and potentially liberated state with the power to resist and transform.

These four theoretical perspectives also offer a way of conceptually defining what 'counts as evidence' of pedagogy, learning and knowledge in my empirical data.

Bernstein, the Situated Learning theorists, and post-Vygotskian theorists all emphasise the collective and social nature of learning processes. In this study, the trade union is viewed as an activity system or a community of practice, which is in turn part of a wider activity system or communities of practice – the trade union movement. It is assumed that forms of knowledge and learning processes are not necessarily continuous over time and space within this community of practice, and variations may signal important things about how learning and knowledge 'work' in this context.

Knowledge

Knowledge is not only a discursive phenomenon but may also assume embodied forms. In other words, evidence of what people know is sought not only in what people say (or do not say) but also in what they do (or do not do), individually and collectively. Knowledge is viewed as reflecting and shaping social relations

within the trade union context, and at the level of broader, structural relations of power. 'New knowledge' involves 'going beyond the given' in terms of individual as well as collectively-held assumptions, understandings and practices.

Learning

Learning is both a process of imbibing knowledge and a dynamic, two-way process involving the active construction of knowledge in interaction with people and the environment. Evidence of learning will be sought not only in recognisable pedagogic contexts (that is, events that are self-consciously labelled as educational events) but also within a range of ordinary day-to-day trade union activities that involve meaning-making and identity-construction.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy involves all those processes and activities "which indicate the direction in which people are encouraged to go or discouraged from going" (Rogoff, 1984: 147).

Pedagogy may be intentional and conscious or unconscious and unintentional; it is located in individual as well collective processes. Tools of mediation describe the role of people, the organizational environment and the activities, technologies, symbols and artefacts that assist learners to appropriate knowledge or skills; tools of mediation always inscribe relations of power.

In discussing the theoretical perspectives outlined in this chapter, it has often been necessary to talk also about methodological approaches, and the conceptual framework outlined above has significant methodological implications. It is the task of the following chapter to spell these out.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter outlines the overall methodological approach to this study. It explains the use of a case study design, and the choices made in methods of data collection and analysis. It concludes by considering issues of the validity, generalisability and politics and ethics of this study.

Broad methodological approach

Social researchers need to be explicit about their methodology and their way of thinking about and studying social reality. Researchers and writers do not ‘speak from nowhere’ but are always socially and materially located (Gray, 2003: 111). Chapter 1 explained how my own history influenced my choice of topic and the focus of this study. This section outlines the broad methodological approach that has guided this research, including my ontological and epistemological assumptions: what I assume is ‘knowable’, and how we come to know what we know.

The goal of this research is exploratory in nature in that it ventures into a pedagogic domain that is relatively under-researched and under-theorised. It is an instance of basic research, in that its primary aim is to advance understanding of a particular domain of pedagogy. Although I hope to generate insights and understandings that might be used to enhance education practice, the primary purpose for which the study has been designed is to make a contribution towards a theorised understanding of this field of practice.

Critical, interpretive research

This research is qualitative in orientation: it involves a naturalistic study of a real world setting, and asks how this can be understood holistically, as a complex and interrelated system. The study falls within the tradition of critical, qualitative research, and has been influenced by that body of critical social theory which is concerned with social inequalities, the nature of social structure, power, culture

and human agency, and which is directed towards social change (Carspecken, 1996: 3).

My interpretive methodological approach assumes that all human action is meaningful and needs to be understood in the context of social practice and social interaction (Usher, 1996a). People's experiences occupy a central place in interpretive research and in exploring the research questions, this study will seek to understand workers' experiences of learning within their trade union and the meanings that they bring to education and knowledge.

This thesis will treat 'experience' critically. Experience may work to conceal rather than illuminate the connections between different social structures, but it can also speak of the composition of the social formation, and can thus be used analytically and critically in research (Gray, 2003: 27). An analysis of workers' descriptions of reality not only gives insight into how they experience their social worlds, but may also reveal something important about how that social world operates.

Constructivism, structuralism and materialism

This thesis tries to tread a path between constructivism and structuralism. The term, 'constructivism' and its cognate term, 'constructionism', have a number of different meanings in contemporary academic debates, derived from different theories and often implying different epistemological and ontological assumptions (Moll, 2002).

This thesis proceeds on the assumption that learning is a dialectical process which involves both the imbibing of knowledge and the active construction of understanding. The methodological stance of this thesis distances itself from post-modern forms of constructivism which are idealist (reducing everything to language, and therefore to the world of ideas) and relativist (maintaining that there are many truths and all descriptions of reality are mere constructions which are all equally valid) (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999: 168). This study assumes there is a material reality which can be studied; although our knowledge of this reality will always be provisional and contingent, we need to retain the notion that some theories of reality are more convincing than others, and it is possible to have some standards for valid argumentation.

My methodological approach has been influenced by a historical materialist perspective which seeks to understand the social world through its historical development and embeddedness in the material conditions of life. It draws on materialist understandings of culture as being “produced by individuals as active agents, but not in conditions of their own choosing” (Gray, 2003: 42), and as constituting not only a response to particular structural conditions, but also as reproducing class structure.

Research design

The key element in this research project is its choice of a case study design. This section outlines my reasons for adopting a case study approach, the rationale for the selection of my case, and the steps in the research process.

Choice of a case study approach

The aims of this study were to achieve an in-depth understanding of particular phenomena (processes of learning and forms of pedagogy and knowledge) within a particular context, and the research was influenced by social theories of learning that view these as situated, contextualised processes. A case study method could afford not only an in-depth insight into social processes and meanings within a real-life, restricted context, but its holistic approach would also allow me to explore the question of ‘how things work’ within a complex but bounded system.

An important strength of the case study method is its ‘great potential for theory development’ (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 283). Given the under-theorisation of the trade union as a site of learning and pedagogy, a case study approach allowed me to probe and expand existing theories of learning and pedagogy which have been developed primarily in other pedagogic domains. One limitation of the case study approach is that although it affords an “intelligent grasp of engagements in specific contexts” it does not generate “findings or rules that can be widely generalised” (Millar, 1983: 118). This limitation will be dealt with in the last section of this chapter.

Rationale for case selection

One of the first questions posed was whether to have one or more cases in this study. My original intention was to focus on more than one case, so that data could be analysed comparatively. However, as my research got under way, it became clear that focusing on more than one case would restrict my ability to capture the level of detail in patterns of interaction, or the richness and depth of meaning which I wanted to achieve. My choice was therefore to undertake only one, in-depth case study.

Most of the larger trade unions in South Africa have a nation-wide presence with branches in major cities or towns, and there are nearly sixty trade union branches in Cape Town alone⁴¹. There were numerous criteria that could have influenced my choice of case including: the size of the union; the sector in which it organises; the demographics of its membership; the union's history and current politics; the nature of its education work; or my own familiarity with the union and its level of accessibility to me.

Ultimately, I selected as my case the Cape Town branch of SAMWU. As was noted in Chapter 1, this branch is not the most representative of black trade unions in South Africa in terms of the composition of its membership, its history or politics. However, representivity is not as central to the generalisability or validity of case study research as are some other factors (Burawoy, 1998: 11) – an issue that will be addressed later in this chapter.

The Cape Town branch of SAMWU constitutes an 'exemplary' case in the sense that whatever the demography of its membership, interactions between workers in the union present one, real-life example of processes of learning and forms of education and knowledge in a trade union context. However, some of the factors that led me to select this case were pragmatic: the proximity of this union to where I lived and worked made it easy to gain access for my fieldwork which I expected to extend over a considerable period of time. Furthermore, the predominance of Afrikaans in the union meant that as an English-speaking researcher able to speak Afrikaans as a second language, but with a limited grasp

⁴¹ This is an estimation made by the Western Cape office of Ditsela.

of isiXhosa and isiZulu, I would be able to follow most of the verbal interaction and dialogue within the union which I would not have been able to do otherwise.

Another key factor was the issue of access. Through past education and research work, I was already familiar with this union branch, had numerous personal contacts and close acquaintances amongst worker leaders and staff of the union, and I was a known and relatively trusted 'outsider' to many within the branch. Since engagement (rather than detachment) is crucial to critical, interpretative, case study research, my familiarity with this branch would facilitate making meaning of my data.

It was shown in Chapter 1 that the history of SAMWU followed a different rhythm compared to the majority of other black trade unions in South Africa, and it was quite atypical of the majority of unions that were to join COSATU in the mid-1980s. It is my view that the history and the current context of the Cape Town branch of SAMWU makes it a particularly illuminating case study.

Firstly, the brief historical sketch in Chapter 1 showed that over the past 25 years, this branch underwent remarkable organisational and political transformation. This transformation could not have occurred without significant new learning on the part of the workers who comprised its membership. Given the fact that until recently municipal workers tended to keep their jobs 'for life', it seemed possible that a significant proportion of the branch's current members might still carry this historical learning experience – an experience which my research questions required me to probe and document.

Secondly, SAMWU members, as public sector workers, have experienced particularly harshly the impact of globalisation and the post-apartheid state's neo-liberal economic policies over the past few years. They have had to seek strategies of dealing with this, while at the same time taking account of the service delivery needs of poor, local communities. SAMWU members seemed to face what Engeström would describe as 'accumulating structural tensions' that call for 'imaginative praxis' – the 'highest' form of learning (Engeström, 2002: 8 – 10). This suggested that the Cape Town branch of SAMWU was a potentially a significant case in terms of my thesis' focus on knowledge and learning.

Having selected this union and its Cape Town branch as my case study, the next consideration was the forms of action and interaction on which to focus the research.

Data collection

Planning the fieldwork

Qualitative research is an iterative process and the research design needs to be fluid – a ‘flexible grid for action’ (Durrheim, 1999: 32). In exploratory research in particular, the design needs to be relatively open and flexible and able to generate new insights and questions. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983: 28) also point to the ‘serendipitous development’ of research design in ethnographic research.

Nevertheless, before embarking on my fieldwork, the following questions needed answers:

- what kinds of data were needed?
- where could I find such data? and
- how would I collect this data?

What kinds of data?

Chapter 2 concluded by clarifying what would ‘count as evidence’ of learning, pedagogy and knowledge in the trade union context. Following the conceptual definitions outlined there, my data collection needed to focus on:

- collective spaces within the union;
- not only what participants say, but also what they do, that is, individual and collective actions and interactions between participants;
- not only ‘recognisable’ education activities where pedagogy is conscious and deliberate, but also other forms of participation and organisational practices that involve meaning-making and identity-construction, where pedagogy might be embedded in actions, processes or technologies;

- not only what the union's written documents present as 'official' versions of organisational practices, but also the 'real life' organisational processes.

Where to find this data?

I assumed that forms of pedagogy and knowledge and processes of learning are not necessarily continuous across sites within this activity system, and that continuities and changes could signal important things about how learning and knowledge 'work' in this context. However, the very broad definitions of learning, pedagogy and knowledge referred to at the end of Chapter 2 meant that virtually every site within the union could potentially yield data of value. I needed to find a way to select sites in which I could focus my data collection.

To do this, I drew on Carspecken's notions of social site and social setting (Carspecken, 1996: 34-35). I had already selected the Cape Town branch of SAMWU as the *social site* (delimited geographically and temporally, and where routine activities take place). On the basis of my prior understanding of the structure and functioning of this trade union branch, I identified three potential *settings* (places where tacit, shared understandings set boundaries on expected behaviour, roles or interactions) within which education and learning might happen: (1) structured education programmes of the union; (2) sites of day-to-day, routine involvement by members of the union; and (3) instances of mass action⁴².

1. The union's **planned education programmes** are most immediately recognisable as sites of pedagogy and learning. What are the key components of these programmes? The only training that happens on a systematic, regular basis is the Foundation Shop-steward Training programme. In addition, the union runs a range of 'special issue' courses, placing particular emphasis on 'political education' and in recent years, increasingly prioritising staff training. (Further details of these programmes are presented in Chapter 4). In my data gathering, I observed instances of each of these three types of programmes.

⁴² This sub-division is necessarily an artificial one as the boundaries between these different settings are porous, and it is often difficult to distinguish clearly between them. For example, one form of organisational involvement – meetings – often included a 'workshop' component, while education programmes often focused on developing understanding around critical issues that would form the basis of decision-making in meetings. It will also be shown that instances of mass actions were interspersed with meetings, while at least one meeting spilled over into mass action.

2. Forms of routine organisational involvement occur in many sites in the union where members come together to receive reports, exchange information, strategise and take collective decisions. Although I gathered background interview data on a range of forms of organisational involvement, my observations focused on meetings where forms of participation are most easily accessible and observable.

Meetings happen at various levels within the union. Workers' starting point for involvement in their union is the workplace – the workshop or 'depot'. Here, workers come together in depot-level meetings, usually convened by their elected shop-stewards. At the time of this research, all shop-stewards representing workers in a particular geographical area met together every six weeks in a Shop-steward Area Council.⁴³ Delegates are sent to a Branch Executive Committee (BEC) which also meets every six weeks. (See Appendix 1 for a diagram of branch structures of the union). The BEC receives reports from, and mandates representatives to take the branch's views to the union's 'higher' structures at a provincial or national level, as well as other forums (such as the Bargaining Council⁴⁴ or sub-committees dealing with Health, Safety and the Environment, or workplace Education and Training). Some shop-stewards also represent their branch on national policy-making structures (dealing with issues such as water, energy, housing, transport, health and local government), and may even sit on international policy research or trade union bodies.

In selecting sites for data-gathering, I focused on meetings at levels closer to the branch level: that is, depot-level meetings, and meetings of Area Councils, the BEC and provincial structures.

3. Instances of mass action are impossible to predict. I knew from the past history of the branch that workers had engaged in 'go-slows', work stoppages, workplace occupations and 'sit-ins' of municipal offices, 'wild-cat' strikes as well as longer strikes (see Rudin, 1996). The national strike that took place over three weeks in July 2002 was a prime example of the 'serendipity' that Hammersley

⁴³ The Shop-steward Area Councils at this time included: Cape Town (CTM), Tygerberg, South Peninsula, Helderberg, Blaauwburg, Oostenburg, and Cape Metro (CMC).

⁴⁴ Wages of municipal workers are negotiated in the South African Local Government Bargaining Council between employer and union representatives.

and Atkinson refer to (1983: 28) in ethnographic research, and it allowed me to gather particularly rich and appropriate data in this setting.

How to collect this data?

Typical qualitative methods of data collection in interpretive research are observation and interviewing. Observation is the central method of ethnography: it allows the researcher to see what people *do* rather than merely what they say they do (Gray, 2003: 82). Although this study is not wholly an ethnographic one, my approach to defining knowledge and learning as observable dimensions of social practice made ethnographic methods of enquiry particularly appropriate to this study. I decided on the method of observation as a *first* step in the research on the grounds that it could best afford insights into patterns of interaction and participation indicative of knowledge and learning.

At the same time, interviews could provide insight into workers' experiences of education and learning within the trade union context and the meanings they bring to these experiences; interviews could also deepen the historical perspective of the study, and as a more dialogical method of data-gathering, they could also allow me to tap participants' views on my emerging analysis.

My data collection took place in two cycles of fieldwork: the first using the method of observation, and the second through individual and focus group interviews. Inbetween these two cycles of fieldwork, I developed a preliminary analysis of my data which I took into the interviews in order to get participant feedback.

A third source of data was union and related documents. During the course of both cycles of fieldwork, I collected vast amounts of written documents, including reports from various structures of the union, agendas for and documents from meetings, education materials, newspaper clippings, research reports and evaluation studies for the union. I treated these not only as sources of data, but also as evidence of forms of communication which play an important role in knowledge dissemination and learning within the union.

First cycle of fieldwork: observation

Negotiating access

Hammersley and Atkinson note the problem of gaining access to settings where “the researcher generally has little power, and people have pressing concerns of their own that often give them little reason to co-operate” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 53).

It has already been noted that the issue of ‘access’ played a key role in the initial selection of the case that forms the basis of this study. I was known in my role as academic, trade union educator and researcher to many members of the Cape Town branch of SAMWU, and was personally familiar with a number of individuals who could act as key ‘gatekeepers’ in gaining access to the organisation. I nevertheless chose to approach the organisation as formally as possible to request permission to conduct this research, through a letter to the General Secretary of the union (see Appendix 2). The letter was discussed at the union’s Central Executive Committee and I was informed verbally by the General Secretary that access to the union had been approved.

This formal approach intended to signal my respect for the democratic processes of decision-making within the union, but also to clarify the union’s expectations of me as a researcher. It was aimed at distancing myself from my familiar educator role, and making clear that for the purposes of this project, I would be involved primarily as a researcher, servicing a self-defined research project rather than one commissioned by the union.

A number of key individuals, in particular, the Provincial Educator who serviced the Cape Town branch of SAMWU, played important roles as informants and facilitated access to various sites and events within the union. However, negotiation of access remained a “recurrent preoccupation” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 76): not all parts of the union were equally open to observation, not everyone willing to talk, and not all data that I sought was available. Ironically, I found access most difficult during the strike (ironic, because during the strike, workers were on ‘a public stage’, whereas on all other occasions I had to ‘enter’ the union in order to observe their actions and interactions). I struggled to get information on what events would be taking place, partly because the

course of daily events during the strike was so unpredictable, and also because workers were understandably cautious about making their daily plans too public.

Participation or observation?

There is a wide spectrum of positions that the observer can adopt, ranging from that of primarily participant (where the researcher is incognito and passing as a member of the group), to that of primarily observer. My own role was shaped in the direction of 'observer' rather than 'participant' within the participant-observer spectrum, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, my research required some measure of distancing myself from the union processes in which I had already been involved. In the ethnographic sense, I had already been 'immersed in trade union culture' over a period of nearly 20 years, as both insider and outsider. Although my role was usually confined to that of an outside educator 'running workshops', I had become familiar with many other aspects of union life, and acquired a reasonable amount of tacit knowledge of this context.

Rogoff (1984: 144) has noted that for researchers embedded in educational situations, things are often seen as the way they *must* be, rather than as just one way that things happen to be. In this research I needed deliberately to avoid feeling 'at home' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 102), look at things afresh and see this context with new eyes if possible, put pressure on long-held assumptions, and seek to 'be surprised'.⁴⁵

My emphasis on observation rather than participation was not always sustained. During meetings, I often joined in the rituals of singing, moments of silence for deceased members, and shouting of 'Amandla!'⁴⁶ in moments of collective enthusiasm. It was most difficult during the strike to sustain a role of marginality rather than involvement. In events where workers were engaged in mass action – a march, or *toyi-toyi*⁴⁷ – I participated fully in this action. It would have been extremely difficult not to do so, whatever my own political persuasions, because

⁴⁵ Paul Willis, whose work over many years has problematised questions of methods in cultural studies, refers to the element of 'surprise' in research (cited in Gray, 2003: 6).

⁴⁶ 'Power!'

⁴⁷ A form of chanting-marching-dancing performed in a militant mood.

on these occasions I was physically present as part of the group of workers concerned. However, this form of engagement was also an expression of my support for workers' actions, made at a time when they were calling upon communities and the public in general to 'take sides' and stand in solidarity with workers in their struggle against management.

Selecting sites for observation

I observed 16 different 'events' over the two year period, February 2001 to February 2003, totalling over 70 hours of observation (see Appendix 3 for a detailed list of the events observed).

I observed three of the union's planned and structured education programmes, each directed at a different target audience, with a different educational focus: a Foundation Shop-steward Training programme (FSST), a political education workshop which formed part of a Branch Executive Committee meeting, and a national, organiser training programme attended by some members of the Cape Town branch. These education events were selected on the basis of the following:

1. *Foundation Shop-steward Training programme*: the union sees this programme as the 'foundation' of all its education work; also it is one of the only programmes that runs with any degree of consistency and regularity⁴⁸.
2. *A political education workshop*: its focus suggested a broader, more political and theoretical orientation than the union's FSST programme which has a significant skills development component.
3. *A national, organiser training workshop*: this had a different target group (union staff rather than shop-stewards), took place at a national rather than local level of the union, and it could potentially illuminate differences in union pedagogy across different sites within the union.

I observed eight union meetings during the course of this research: three meetings run with ordinary union members in a municipal depot, three Shop-steward Area Councils, one Branch Executive Committee (BEC) meeting, and a meeting of the Provincial Educators' Forum. The depot-level meetings held particular interest

⁴⁸ The 3-day workshop that I observed was the last in a series of Cape Metro branch workshops run for shop-stewards who had taken office after a round of elections in 2000.

because they could provide a picture of interactions of ordinary members of the union in their workplace context. The Area Council meetings and BEC were observed because as constitutional structures which meet every month or six weeks, they present a stable and representative form of activity in which all shop-stewards participate. The Provincial Educator Forum provided a comparative look at organizational involvement at a level 'higher' than the branch.

My observations during the strike took place throughout the three weeks of its duration. However, I took detailed fieldnotes of four specific moments during and after the strike: (1) a march of workers through the centre of the city on the first day of the strike; (2) a meeting of local union leadership at the union's offices at the end of the first week of the strike, aimed at critically assessing the progress of the strike; (3) activities at the union offices on the ninth day of the strike where worker representatives grappled with the organisational, strategic and political demands of the strike); and (4) an assessment of the strike carried out by one of the branch's Area Councils approximately two weeks after the end of the strike.

Recording of observations

All events observed were group events, often involving quite large numbers of people in large, draughty venues with poor acoustics. I decided that it would not be worth tape-recording these events, and that video-recording them would be too intrusive. I recorded my observations in a series of notebooks in the form of 'thick descriptions' (Carspecken, 1996: 45), noting not only what I observed directly (interaction and dialogue), but also the peripheral context, for example, seating arrangements, nature of the venue, participants' age, dress, or mood. Physical artefacts such as union insignia, T-shirts, bags, as well as placards and artefacts carried by workers during the strike that seemed to have symbolic intent, were also noted. I tried to be concrete in my treatment of events, preserving the speech of the actors as accurately as possible (noting who said what to whom, as well as non-verbal behaviour) and the detail and 'local colour' of each event. As with the issue of access, the success of my on-the-spot note-taking varied across situations, and was most difficult during the strike events when I was most actively (bodily) involved in actions other than writing.

My notes included not only empirical observations but also my impressions and initial interpretations at the time, and reflections on my own role and participants'

reactions to me. Some of these comments even ‘nudged’ at theory – confirming or questioning concepts – pointing to the fact that in interpretive research, there is no clear point of division between data collection and analysis. This was also clear when transcribing my fieldnotes into a word processor (whenever possible, on the same day), where further analytical thoughts and comments were added.⁴⁹

Second round of fieldwork: in-depth and focus group interviews

Before I began my fieldwork, I conducted two interviews with the union’s Provincial Education Officer and Branch Secretary in order to get an overview of the structure and functioning of the branch, and details of forthcoming education programmes and meetings which could constitute potential sites of observation. My second round of fieldwork consisted of a series of in-depth, individual and focus-group interviews with branch shop-stewards with two purposes in mind: to supplement and deepen the data collected through observations – thus extending my observations over time and space, and to test the validity of the preliminary analysis which had emerged out of the first round of participant observations. All interviews in the second round of fieldwork were taped and transcribed.

Interviews aimed mainly at testing the validity of my preliminary analysis

I familiarised myself with the data collected in the first round of data collection, grouping it around key, emerging themes, and prepared a report for the union branch, entitled: “Some tentative findings from research on ‘education and learning’ within the Cape Metro Branch of SAMWU” (see Appendix 4). This report constituted a first-level analysis of my data, but a number of interpretations pre-figured those that became central in my final analysis. I sent the written report to the branch secretary with a request to report verbally to members of the branch where they could either validate or raise questions about my initial interpretations. While waiting for a response from the branch, I was invited by the Provincial Education Officer to present the report to a national meeting of 35 union trainers,

⁴⁹ All personal reflections/impressions were separated from empirical observations in a different type-script, to alert me to my own possible sources of bias, and to act as an aid in the later process of more systematic analysis.

which provided an opportunity to get feedback from educators drawn more broadly from other branches of the union.

During June 2003, I held focus group interviews (FGIs) with five different shopsteward committees within the Cape Metro branch (see Appendix 5). Each group comprised on average 25 shop-stewards, and each focus group interview lasted approximately one hour. On each occasion, I summarised the key points of my report, and then invited workers to comment or question. Discussions were lively and intense, and in some instances, shop-stewards used this as an opportunity to criticise the functioning of their organisation. While I was mindful of the fact that respondents are not always able to reflect easily upon their own practice, these focus group interviews nevertheless demonstrated that what I was describing was immediately ‘recognisable’ and ‘believable’ (Durrheim, 1999: 46) for the shopstewards concerned. In my subsequent analysis, I viewed the issues that they chose to engage with as being as significant as the content of what they said.

The chapters that follow draw on these interviews primarily as a source of corroborative evidence for my analyses; however the data from these interviews also acted to supplement the information gleaned through observation, and to capture the meanings that workers attach to ‘learning’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘education’.

Interviews aimed mainly at data collection

The first of these interviews – aimed at capturing workers’ subjective experiences of the strike⁵⁰ – was a focus group interview involving a large and shifting group of workers in a cleansing depot. The choice of the depot concerned rested on the issue of access: it would not be easy to gain access to a large grouping of workers, particularly during working hours, and I relied on one of the full-time shopstewards of the branch to set up the interview for me. The interview was largely unstructured, guided by a few, open-ended questions: what were workers’ experiences of the strike, what in their view was achieved, and what problems did

⁵⁰ The interview actually arose out of an approach from the union to myself and another academic colleague, requesting us to help document the strike for the union. Ultimately, the union research project did not materialise, but at the time that I conducted the interview, I hoped that it would be of value to both the union’s planned research project, as well as to this thesis.

they encounter? What emerged was extremely rich data around the meanings these workers brought to the strike and their views of the union. The collective, interactional nature of the interview provided access to intersubjective experiences and threw light on commonalities and differences in workers' experiences of the strike.

This was followed by a series of in-depth interviews with six, full-time shopstewards (FTSSs)⁵¹ of the branch (one was a joint interview), each lasting between one-and-a-half to two hours (see Appendix 5 for dates of the interviews). These interviews aimed primarily to extend my data collection, and the choice of these respondents was selective and purposive. All respondents were longstanding worker leaders who could reflect critically on historical continuities and discontinuities within this union branch and on the recent strike in the light of past experience, and who were in a position to shed light on the relationship between trade union activism and activism within 'the community' more broadly⁵². In addition, I asked respondents to reflect on the events which I had observed and to comment on my analyses of them.

These interviews were unstructured, with a few lead-off questions designed to open up a broad topic (see Appendix 6 for a list of questions). Almost all the interviews elicited lengthy stories and autobiographies from the respondents; I allowed these to proceed unhindered on the understanding that narratives provide a useful way of avoiding the fragmentation of 'experience' that often results from question and answer formats, and allow the rich inter-relatedness of different areas of life to emerge.

The analytical chapters of the thesis draw on these interviews not only to supplement and enrich the observational data, but also to act as 'corroborative evidence'.

⁵¹ At the time of this research, 18 of the union's shop-stewards were designated as 'full-time', and were allowed by management to focus solely on their shop-steward duties.

⁵² I was aware beforehand that they were all actively involved also in community-based structures in addition to their union acitivism.

Making use of archival interviews

The union's Head Office had in its archives tape recordings of 17 interviews (each between 90 minutes and three hours long) conducted by the National Education Officer in 1997 with long-standing union staff and worker leaders, for the purposes of writing a history to mark the 10th anniversary of the union. I was granted access to these, and had five interviews with staff and worker leaders based in the Cape Town branch of SAMWU transcribed. Interviewees were the current and past General Secretaries of SAMWU; a past chairperson of the Cape Town branch; a past Western Cape organiser; and a current national office-bearer and past Western Cape provincial chairperson (see Appendix 7 for fuller details of interviewees). These interviews in particular enriched my understanding of the history of this branch.

Analysis and interpretation

While the broad aims of this study are exploratory in nature, as noted in Chapter 1, this research began with some specific questions in mind. The approach to the analysis of my data was therefore partly descriptive and partly interpretive. I wanted to describe and categorise the processes of learning and forms of pedagogy and knowledge in the trade union context, but I also wanted to try to understand how and why these manifest themselves differently across time and space.

Within an interpretive paradigm, knowledge formation is conceived as circular, iterative and spiral rather than linear and cumulative (Usher, 1996a: 19). Analysis of data is not a distinct stage of such research; throughout, data collection and analysis are intertwined, with data analysis frequently *driving* further data collection (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 42). In writing this section of the chapter, it has been difficult to separate an account of the data collection from an account of the analysis of this data, as there was a large amount of overlap and constant cross-fertilisation between the two processes.

Preliminary analysis

My first cycle of fieldwork yielded three sets of observational data. As noted earlier, after the first cycle of fieldwork, I undertook a preliminary analysis of my

observational data which involved the comparison of these three data sets and the identification of a number of key themes across the data sets. These were organised into a report to the branch and a verbal summary was presented to shop-stewards in focus-group interviews.

The development of themes was partly inductive and partly deductive. I kept close to everyday language and to the empirical data, and allowed my data to generate new insights and questions. However, these initial themes were clearly guided by the questions raised in Chapter 1, and the theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 2. This is most notable in issues concerning: learning as identity-construction; pedagogy assuming both discursive and non-discursive forms; the weak specialisation of educator and learner roles, and the notion of the 'collective as educator'; the role of culturally-embedded tools of mediation (language and performance in particular); the ideological directedness of union pedagogy; the relationship of forms of pedagogy to internal, organisational relations of power; the relationship of workers' experiential knowledge to knowledge brought into the union from outside of workers' experiences; and the existence of tensions and contradictions in identity-construction, related to the changing workplace context.

Computer coding

At the end of the second cycle of data collection (interviews) I embarked on a process of 'computer assisted qualitative data analysis', CAQDA, utilising a common software package, Nvivo (Richards, 2000), to develop a coding schema and code all the data that had been collected via observations and interviews. CAQDA is frequently linked to the Grounded Theory approach of Glazer and Strauss which holds that theory should emerge inductively out of the data ('data-generated conceptual development'), and should come at the *end* rather than the beginning of the research process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 12-13).

Grounded theory has been critiqued in the research methodology literature. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) have argued that the development of theory rarely takes the purely inductive form implied by Glazer and Strauss. They argue that theory building and data collection are "dialectically linked" and that there is significant value in ethnographic research being used to test existing theory as well as develop it further (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 22, 174, 180-81).

Burawoy (1998: 25) sees grounded theory as a 'positivist' form of qualitative research which tries to limit bias and concentrates on deriving de-contextualised generalisations from the systematic analysis of data. He, too, argues that contrary to grounded theory, prior theory is central to what he calls good, 'reflexive science'.

The process of CAQDA was mainly of practical use in that it helped to reduce my data to smaller, more manageable units, and provided an efficient means for locating and retrieving the data. However, this exercise in computerised coding also demonstrated the need to develop a more explicit analytic approach.

Key questions which guided the analysis

Towards the end of Chapter 1, my main research questions as well as a number of ancillary research questions were identified; these were:

- Where and how does education and learning take place within the trade union, and how does the nature of pedagogy, learning and knowledge vary across sites within the organisation?
- Who plays the roles of educator and learner, and what power relationships exist between them?
- Who or what 'teaches' workers within the context of their own organisations?
- What is the relationship between knowledge derived from workers' own experience, and that derived from outside of their experiences, namely, more 'scientific, academic, systematised' knowledge? How are these different forms of knowledge valued?
- How does the nature of ideological contestation (which seems to be central to workers' education) impact on the nature of trade union pedagogy, and on the role of the trade union educator?
- How have recent changes within the South African labour movement impacted on the historical role of trade union education in striving to effect

social change? Does trade union education act to resist and transcend, or to reproduce dominant relations of power in society?

These questions emerged out of the history of the labour movement in South Africa, but have also been posed within other popular movements at different times and places. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 2, I worked to transform these initial research questions into analytic questions which would guide my data analysis by drawing selectively on key concepts offered by the theoretical bodies of work. These questions were clustered around five areas.

1. Forms of Pedagogy

Where and how does education and learning take place within the trade union?

What forms of social activity do members of this activity system or community of practice engage in, that has learning as one of its significant outcomes? (Situated Learning and Activity theorists).

How may these be characterised as forms of pedagogy, and what social relations are implicated in these activities? (Bernstein).

2. Educator and Learner Roles and Relationships

Who plays the roles of educator and learner?

How specialised are these roles (how strong are the boundaries between them)? (Bernstein)

What 'rules' of social interaction regulate relationships between the educators and learners? (Activity Theorists)

3. Symbolic Tools of Mediation

Who or what 'teaches' workers?

What are the key forms of symbolic mediation? What symbolic tools of mediation are significant by their absence? (Vygotsky)

How do these symbolic tools relate to the social/cultural history of learners, and whose 'voice' (from inside and outside this community of practice) do they carry?

What are the social implications of the recruitment of these tools of mediation? (Vygotsky, Bakhtin).

4. Knowledge

Who is regarded as a source of epistemological authority and what kinds of knowledge are valued?

What forms of knowledge are recruited in union pedagogy, and how specialised are they? (Bernstein)

How do different forms of knowledge articulate with one another (Vygotsky)?

What is the relationship between knowledge derived from workers' own experience, and that derived from outside of their experiences?

To what extent is 'new knowledge' – 'going beyond the given' – sought and achieved? (Engeström)

5. Social purpose of pedagogy

What is the nature of union pedagogy's regulative discourse? (Bernstein)

What is the social purpose of union education, and what are its visions of future possibility? (Engeström)

Does trade union education act to resist and transcend, or to reproduce dominant relations of power in society? (Bakhtin)

How has historical change impacted on the social purpose of trade union education?

Developing a analytical model

In order to reach a more integrated and holistic analytical account, I identified a number of key concepts that offered analytic power and the ability to show the relationship between different elements of my interpretation. It will be shown in Chapter 7 that notions of a 'mixed pallet of competence and performance pedagogy', a 'widely dispersed educator role', 'culturally-embedded tools of mediation', 'hybridity of knowledge', and the 'ambivalent combination of resistance and accommodation' were examples of such concepts.

In posing and answering the analytical questions outlined above, I drew on and reflected critically on the claims of the four theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 2, using them as prisms to illuminate my data rather than as fixed templates. The final stages of my analysis moved beyond these theories to other bodies of social theory (in particular, the scholarship on Southern African cultural studies), and engaged ‘reconstructively’ (Burawoy, 1998: 16) with the theories of pedagogy and knowledge, assessing how they might be extended and elaborated to take better account of my data and my analyses. I concluded my analytical work by developing an analytical model involving the combination and extension of existing theories of pedagogy and knowledge, and aimed at facilitating a ‘conversation’ or dialogue between research into pedagogy in informal and non-formal, collective and social action-oriented contexts, and research on more mainstream sites of teaching and learning.

Presentation of data and analysis

Ruddock (1981) argues that three key questions need to be posed of a case: (i) What is the case about? (ii) How does the case work? and (iii) Why does the case work in this way? These questions provide the broad logic for the way in which the data and analyses are presented in this thesis.

Each of the following data analysis chapters focuses on one particular setting where patterns of interactions have distinctive pedagogic dimensions. Each presents historical and contextual background to this setting, and provides a descriptive account of ‘pedagogy in process’ making selective use of vignettes. The second half of each analytic chapter moves from description to the interpretation and analysis of learning, pedagogy and knowledge in this setting, following the broad lines of analysis outlined above. Towards the end of each chapter, the key points of an emerging analytic argument are summarised, drawing on selected conceptual resources.

Each of the data analysis chapters presents a number of detailed vignettes to provide a descriptive account of ‘pedagogy in process’. This is done in order to communicate to a readership unfamiliar with the processes of interaction in a trade union, a holistic, integrated picture of events within the union which are later prised apart to analyse thematically. The vignettes also allow me to embark

upon my thematic analysis in the second half of each chapter unimpeded by the need to present a large amount of data. Although the vignettes may be largely descriptive in purpose and have the appearance of 'narrative realism', they are by no means pre-analytical. They are carefully selected excerpts from my field notes and have been designed to foreground particular issues taken up later in the analysis.

Abundant use is made of quotations in many of the vignettes and subsequent analysis, reflecting my desire to preserve the distinctive voice of workers who formed the subject of this study. These quotes are used as 'example', not as 'proof'; they help to make points and provide supporting evidence. In all cases of interviews, the quotes represent the exact words spoken; this was not always strictly the case during observations.⁵³

Where Afrikaans only was spoken, quotes have been translated into English; where a mixture of Afrikaans and English was spoken (involving what will later be identified as 'code-switching') the original has been preserved and translation provided in italics, and in brackets.

The following conventions are used when quoting: W1, W2 and so on are used to refer to speakers who are workers, and Ss1, Ss2 and so on, for speakers who are shop-stewards (in some cases, followed by the committee which they represent, in brackets). 'FTSS' refers to full-time shop-stewards, and acronyms refer to office bearers or officials. Square brackets [] indicate collective responses, and ordinary brackets () indicate my sense of intended meaning, or observations of body language or other actions. Underlining is used to indicate strong emphasis in the oral rendition.

The second last chapter of this thesis considers key, common features of learning and forms of pedagogy and knowledge across different sites within the union context and what the broader social and theoretical significance of these features might be. The final chapter proposes an analytical model which might facilitate dialogue between research into pedagogy in informal and non-formal, collective

⁵³ In the case of observations, however, the difference between what was said and what was noted was never more than a slight change in phraseology. Where I could not get down a an accurate version of what was said, I did not attempt to transcribe what was said.

and social action-oriented contexts, and that focused on more mainstream sites on teaching and learning.

Questions of validity

This study has sought to establish validity (the status of its ‘truth claims’, or the kinds of limitations that need to be taken into account when making truth claims) within and through the traditions of critical, qualitative, interpretive research. It has proceeded on the assumption that the measures used to judge validity within positivist epistemology – generalisability, reliability and objectivity – cannot act as appropriate measures of the validity of this research.

With regard to reliability, in interpretive research it is not possible to aim for ‘consistency, stability and repeatability of results’ as meanings are unique, and the situations analysed are never replicable (Hollway and Jefferson, 2002: 79). In regard to objectivity, it is widely accepted that qualitative research “... however exploratory, involves selection and interpretation” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 12-13). Neither do ethnographic methods give access – through some notion of authenticity – to ‘the real’ truth; here too there is always selection, representation, and construction of meaning.

Carspecken argues that from the perspective of critical social research, good research should not be biased. Although all research has value orientations which shape the reasons for undertaking the research and choice of focus amongst other things, these should not determine the research findings. While there is no ‘final truth’ on any issue, it is assumed that some findings can point *towards* the truth (Carspecken, 1996: 57). Critical perspectives foreground the principle that truth and power are interconnected: reality can only ever be represented in language and symbol systems that are mediated by power relations. In order to arrive at valid conclusions, researchers need to look for ways in which unequal power distorts truth claims (Carspecken, 1996: 21).

What then does validity mean in qualitative research and how is it possible to achieve defensible knowledge claims? In qualitative research, the validity of truth claims is generally assumed to rest upon:

1. *Plausibility*: the extent to which a claim seems likely to be true given its relationship to what we and others currently take to be knowledge that is beyond reasonable doubt; and
2. *Credibility*: whether the claim is of a kind that, given what we know about how the research was carried out, we can judge it to be very likely to be true (Open University, 1993: 7).

According to Carspecken (1996), validity rests on whether:

1. data or field records produced are true to what occurred;
2. the analysis was conducted correctly; and
3. the conceptual basis of analytical techniques was sound.

1. Claims that data or field records produced are true to what occurred

Carspecken argues that the principle way of making a 'truth claim' in the production of the primary record is by showing that data was collected objectively; this is achieved through:

- data triangulation (the use of multiple sources);
- prolonged engagement by the researcher with the site of study;
- the use of low inference vocabulary in the written record;
- the use of peer debriefing to check for possible biases; and
- measures to reduce possible distortions that could result from unequal power relations between researcher and respondents; this can be achieved by constructing a primary record in deference to respondents' perceptions as much as possible, and establishing supportive, non-authoritarian relations with participants in the study (Carspecken, 1996: 88-89).

I 'immersed' myself in the case study for a period of three years, in addition to a prolonged prior engagement with trade union education over many years. I sought to create a verbatim written record in the case of interviews, and 'thick descriptions' – together with verbatim records where possible – of my

observations. Interviewees were invited to read and correct the transcripts of their interviews. Data in this study was ‘triangulated’ from three different sources: observation, interviews, and documentary sources. In some cases these corroborated each other and in other cases, not. I sought to heed Hammersley and Atkinson’s cautionary note on triangulation that: “One should not... adopt a naively ‘optimistic’ view that the aggregation of data from different sources will unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture.... *Differences* between sets or types of data may be just as important and illuminating” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 199).⁵⁴

2. Claims that the analysis was conducted correctly

This study has sought to follow the validity criteria of building its inferences on appropriately selected ‘samples’, and building low-level inferences based on frequently recurring patterns of interaction (Carspecken, 1996). I have sought a critical perspective on my work by looking for exceptions, questioning assumptions, exploring alternative interpretations, and seeking critical peer dialogue in order to avoid ‘finding evidence for what you already believe’ (Terre Blanche and Kelly, 1999).

Analytic findings should be tested for their fit with previous knowledge, including direct experience with similar cases (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). There also needs to be some ‘fit’ or match between key inferences and existing social theory, although “... matching alone is not quite enough to produce a convincing argument ... You must build abstractions off of your empirical data to the point where a fit can be recognized” (Carspecken, 1996: 203). Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the thesis attempt to interpret the empirical data at a lower level of inference than Chapter 7, which relates interpretations more systematically to existing social theory.

It is not possible to know whether any one interpretation is ‘the correct’ one, but there are criteria for evaluating the validity of an interpretation. According to Hollway and Jefferson, valid interpretations must enable us to illuminate other aspects of the analysis. A ‘robust’ interpretation should be “like throwing a stone

⁵⁴ Gray argues also that it is important not to carry out triangulation for its own sake but in order to confront threats to the validity of the analysis, and that it is important to allow differences and contradictions to emerge (Gray, 2003: 72).

into a pond: if an interpretation ‘works’ the ripples reverberate through the rest of the analysis” (Hollway and Jefferson, 2002: 60). In the last stages of my analysis, the identification of five ‘core’ categories that seemed to have key analytic power was an attempt to reach such a robust interpretation.

Some ethnographers have argued that a crucial test for their accounts is whether the actors whose beliefs and behaviour they purport to describe recognise the validity of those accounts. For example, Carspecken (1996: 163) argues that “(t)he most powerful validation of meaning constructions available occurs when the subjects themselves reconstruct them when facilitated by the researcher in non-leading ways”. However, Hammersley and Atkinson have argued that it is important to recognise the limitations of respondent validation:

... we cannot assume that any actor is a privileged commentator on his or her own actions ... Much social action operates at a subconscious level, leaving no memory traces.... In short, while actors are well-placed informants on their own actions, they are no more than that; and their accounts must be analysed in the same way as any other data, with close consideration being given to possible threats to validity (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 196).

In this study, I sought critical feedback on elements of my analysis from a number of different groupings amongst my research subjects. These included the focus group interviews of branch shop-stewards in a context where they could debate my points collectively; in-depth interviews with full-time shop-stewards of the branch who were longstanding activists, and whose personal histories and experiences might allow them to view their own trade union practices in a critically reflective way; and two senior education staff of the union who had long-standing experience of trade union organisation, and had engaged in extensive debates around trade union education both within their union structures and on trade union educator courses. I did not seek ‘objective validation’ from these sources, but took seriously and sought to understand the meaning and significance of their responses to my analysis, and these influenced my analysis in many direct and indirect ways.

One of the elements regarded as crucial for ensuring internal validity in social research is the reflexivity of the researcher – the recognition that “we are part of the social world we study” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 14). Rather than

engaging in futile attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher, we should set about understanding them:

If we reflect, therefore on our own subjectivities (and identities) in process and, at the very least, as the product of historical, social and cultural discourses, then it is possible to go beyond 'the subjective' when using our own (and others' experience) in our explorations of cultural processes (Gray, 2003: 75).

In this study, I could not escape the implications of my race, class, gender and language group which in all aspects set me apart from the lives and experiences of the workers whom I sought to understand. I have sought to acknowledge my position as a white, female, middle-class and middle-aged South African researcher, with less than adequate multi-lingual skills, and will try to point to situations where my social identity might have been important in my interpretation of the meaning of a particular issue or event.

Questions of generalisability

In relation to his 'extended case study' method, Burawoy (1998: 16) argues that each case study is unique, and therefore 'representivity' is not an option to establish generalisation. He poses the question: "If representation is not feasible, is there any other way of producing generality?" He answers by arguing: "Instead of inferring generality directly from data, we can move from one generality to another, to more inclusive generality", and that this is achieved through the case's contribution to the 'reconstruction' of theory. In other words, case studies should allow us to expand our understanding of theoretical propositions and develop our conceptual framework, thereby achieving what Babbie and Mouton (2001: 283) refer to as 'analytic generalization'.

In this thesis, I have tried to engage with, combine and extend established theories of pedagogy so that they can give a better account of my case. In so doing, I hope to extend their power of analytic generalisation so that they might become more inclusive of the range of variations (in forms of learning, pedagogy and knowledge) which they purport to conceptualise and explain.

The ethics and 'politics' of this research

This study has sought to follow the generally-agreed ethical principles of social research, including that: participation of research subjects was voluntary; no harm was done to participants as a result of the research process; anonymity and confidentiality is respected in the presentation of research findings; honesty is maintained to the research subjects and to the scientific community to which the thesis is directed; and appropriate ascription of authorship is noted (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 521-27).

At the heart of social research however, there lies an additional question of the 'politics of knowledge'. According to Gray, we need to ask: "Who are we as researchers, not only to grasp the right to intervene in other people's lives, but to use their words and experiences, freely given, to form the basis of our dissertations, theses and books?" (Gray, 2003: 23). In other words, we cannot *presume* the right of students, researchers and academics to investigate people's lives. This is related to a longstanding issue within anthropology of 'surveillance' and 'display', of the "ethnographer fixing his or her gaze on different cultures and rendering them visible.... In this process anthropologists tended to present groups as 'other' and 'exotic' emphasising the difference between 'them' (the primitive) and 'us' (the civilised)" (Gray, 2003: 18). In social research more generally, there are similar mechanisms of power which have functioned, where working class people, the 'poor' or 'disadvantaged' have been produced as 'the other' and "aestheticised as 'exotics'" (Gray, 2003: 19). As Gray adds – 'putting it bluntly' – this is exploitative research.

I have sought to approach the subjects of this study not as 'objects' to be investigated, but as people who are in possession of knowledge, and from whom we – as a research community – can learn something of value. In my interactions with the subjects of this study, I have treated them with respect and humility, and tried to answer honestly questions about the research and how I plan to use the data. I have sought to undertake this research reflexively, recognising that the research itself is a form of intervention in the social world. I have sought to avoid both the role of 'champion'⁵⁵ as well as assumptions that my relationship with my

⁵⁵ "...celebrating the hitherto hidden heroes (and heroines) of the everyday" (Gray, 2003: 49).

research subjects makes me 'one of them'. In relation to the latter, I am acutely aware of the gulfs of culture, language, class, gender and 'race' that separate me from my research subjects. In terms of the former, there are more useful things I could do (other than this research thesis) to 'champion' the workers' cause, and possibly the most useful purpose this thesis could serve would be to hold up a 'critical mirror' through which workers can reflect on their own experiences and achievements, and draw useful insights for the future.

Limitations of the study

The first, obvious limitation of this research is the use of a single case study, and one which is atypical of the majority of black trade unions in South Africa. This limits the empirical generalisability of the study. However, as noted above, the generalisability of case studies ultimately rests on their theoretical contribution (Burawoy, 1998). It is hoped that this study's critical engagement with established theories of pedagogy, as well as its attempt to develop a conceptual language and method with which to analyse further cases, will enhance its theoretical generalisability.

This study draws eclectically on a range of different theoretical and conceptual resources, and its research questions are broad and multiple. My aim was to retain a focus on a range of different elements of pedagogy in order to develop an understanding of how these elements 'work together' as a whole within the trade union context. Inevitably, this means that many issues have only been touched upon superficially. In particular, neither a systematic categorisation of different forms of knowledge in use, nor a rigorous analysis of internal power relations within the union was attempted.

This study did not draw on an established analytic framework already tested by other researchers in a trade union setting. My analytic framework evolved as the analytical work of the thesis progressed, and a model emerged out of this analytical work. As a result, it has been difficult to present my analysis in a coherent and ordered way, while at the same time capturing the dynamism of this process. Certain inconsistencies in the thesis may well have emerged as a result.

Finally, my specific focus on pedagogy (and the process of learning and forms of knowledge involved in this) was intended to facilitate a conversation between researchers of pedagogy in informal and non-formal, collective and social action-oriented settings and those focusing on more mainstream sites of teaching and learning. However, this has meant that other 'conversations' have been excluded, and this thesis has not engaged with a range of important political and sociological questions that are embedded in the practice of trade union education, and that are addressed in some of the literature on industrial sociology, working class movements and the sociology of education.

CHAPTER 4:

‘LABOUR’S SCHOOLS’⁵⁶: UNION EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Introduction

This chapter is the first of three that describe and analyse selected sites of pedagogy and learning in the union. It focuses on what is most commonly recognized as a site of pedagogy: structured union education programmes. It begins by giving a brief overview of the historical development of the union’s education programmes and their key educational objectives. It then presents a descriptive account of pedagogy in process, based on observational data of three different education programmes. The second half of the chapter makes a detailed analysis of these education programmes following the broad lines of enquiry outlined in the previous chapter, namely: forms of pedagogy; educator and learner roles; symbolic tools of mediation; the relationship between different forms of knowledge; and the social purpose of union pedagogy. In addition to observational data, my analysis will also draw on documentary sources as well as interview data.

Union education in historical context

The historical development of the Cape Town branch of SAMWU’s education programmes followed the shifting organisational character of the branch and its gradual process of democratisation. In the early years of SAMWU’s predecessor , the CTMWA, when the organisation was dominated by a politically conservative and elitist leadership, there is no evidence of any union-organised education work. It was only with the growing politicisation of municipal workers during the 1970s and early 80s, influenced by the growth and radicalisation of popular struggle more generally in Cape Town and the country as a whole – that the leadership of the CTMWA began to take seriously the building of shop-steward structures and the mobilisation of broader membership participation. As a result, in 1982 the

⁵⁶ This term of Welton’s (1987a and b) is explained in Chapter 1.

CTMWA set up its first in-house education programme for shop-stewards and introduced cultural evenings in which the broader membership could participate. After the establishment of SAMWU in 1987, union education was put on a more organised footing with the establishment of a national education office and the post of National Education Officer (NEO). During the 1990s, Provincial Education Officers (PEOs) were appointed to carry out education at provincial and branch level.

The union's educational objectives are intimately bound up with its organisational and political objectives. The overall goal of education is centred on "building collective working class power" (SAMWU, 1996: 6). The union's constitution cites as one of its objectives:

To develop a strong shopsteward movement and to provide this movement with education and training in the skills to promote members' participation in the union and to protect and advance members' interest in the workplace (SAMWU 2003b: 11).

Thus educational objectives are very closely allied to organisational objectives.

What sorts of programmes does the union promote in order to achieve these educational/organisational objectives? As noted in the previous chapter, a key component of SAMWU's education work is its Foundation Shop-steward Training (FSST), the only programme that the union runs on a regular, systematic basis. However, the union delivers in addition a range of 'special issue' courses "at a basic /introductory level and an advanced level" which "(span) both theory and the development of negotiating skills on such issues" (SAMWU, 1996: 7). Such courses focus on areas such as health safety and environment, political economy, educator skills, collective bargaining, labour law, workplace education and training, gender studies, union organisational management and development, local government, and union finances (SAMWU, 1996, 9-10).

The union also places strong emphasis on 'political education' (SAMWU, 2002g: 4). In July 2001, the union held a national Political Policy School and produced a Political Policy Discussion booklet to enable delegates to take political discussions more widely into the organisation (SAMWU, 2002/3). Political education is aimed at supporting and building the key campaigns the union is involved in (SAMWU, 2002g: 4), for example, its anti-privatisation campaign. It

also envisages political education taking place through “low budget forms of educational self-advancement outside of the formal education programme” such as study circles (SAMWU, 2002g: 5). In recent years, the union has also increasingly prioritised staff training, while its quarterly magazine, *Workers News*, printed in three languages, is the only form of ‘mass education’ aimed at the union’s general membership.

In comparison with many other COSATU affiliates, SAMWU’s education programmes are relatively well run and resourced. Nevertheless, leadership within the union is concerned about the impact of its education work, and a recent education review document argues that there is a general problem of ‘low capacity’ amongst some shop-stewards and staff in relation to the high knowledge demands currently being placed on the union:

The nature of the trade unions’ activity has changed. In a democracy many of the struggles depend on political and socio-economic lobbying around government policy and legislation. In the workplace the promotion of public service delivery, and opposition to privatisation requires detailed knowledge about services. They also require capacities to facilitate participation rather than demagoguery. It involves engagement with management on technical terrain (SAMWU, 2003a: 44).

None of the union’s education programmes involve formal assessment of learners, although with its FSST programme, the union has attempted to introduce some “degree of ‘streaming’ of shopstewards to achieve learner groups which have similar needs or are at a similar level” (SAMWU, 1996:10). An external evaluation of shop-steward training in the Cape Metro branch found that “(b)oth educators and shop stewards expressed that there was a need for some sort of individual assessment of learning after the course” (Coetzee, 2002: 26). However, a union document argues that despite the “inevitable pressure towards the accreditation of (union) courses”, the issue needs to be debated further, and that “... there is a need to resist the notion that all Education and Training must be slotted into the NQF...” (SAMWU, 1996: 12).⁵⁷

⁵⁷ The union has however sent increasing numbers of staff and worker leaders on Ditsela (a national, trade union education institute) courses over the past few years, some of which are accredited.

In the course of this research, large amounts of written union education materials and documents were collected which provided some basis for an analysis of union pedagogy (see, for example, SAWMU, 1996; 1998; 2002g; 2002/03; 2003b and c; 2004a and b). However, as noted in Chapters 2 and 3, my conceptual approach viewed knowledge as ‘doing’ and learning as ‘social practice’, and capturing these dimensions of knowledge and learning necessitated observing actual instances of union pedagogy in process. The following section provides a descriptive account of three education programmes observed during the process of this research, which provide empirical data for the subsequent analysis.

Observations of union pedagogy in process

The three education programmes that form the main basis of the analysis in this chapter were: a Foundation Shop-steward Training programme, a political education workshop which formed part of a Branch Executive Committee meeting, and a national, organiser training programme attended by some members of the Cape Town branch. The analysis will also draw on my observations of a meeting of the union’s Provincial Educator Forum as well as an ‘education slot’ of a shop-steward council meeting (both described more fully in the next chapter). (For full details of dates and locations of all these events, see Appendix 3). In addition to written documentation, individual and focus group interviews will be drawn on (see Appendix 5).

The following section of this chapter will present background detail on, and a short vignette of, each of the first three education events listed above. The vignettes are mainly intended to provide a ‘thick description’ of selected moments of pedagogy in process in these education programmes but are also constructed in such a way as to surface issues and themes that are taken up and elaborated on in the subsequent analysis in the second half of the chapter.

Education programme 1: Foundation shop-steward training (FSST)

Background

The FSST programme is designed at the national level of the union, but is delivered at branch level. A provincial education officer (PEO) usually embarks

on a series of such training programmes following shop-steward elections, which take place every three years. Each programme draws in on average 30 – 35 participants. English is the main language of communication in workshops in the Cape Town branch, although Afrikaans is also spoken and some isiXhosa⁵⁸. There is usually a team of facilitators consisting of the PEO and organisers, assisted by full-time or experienced shop-stewards.

The overall aims of this programme are to:

- equip shop-stewards with “the basic tools they need to be shopstewards” (the ability to recruit and service workers, build union campaigns, and handle grievance and disciplinary cases);
- “help build the political understanding of shop-stewards”, particularly in relation to “understanding the nature of trade unions and the current political, economic and social context we operate in”; and
- build shop-stewards’ understanding of their workplace context “which includes a broad understanding of the local government context” (SAMWU, 2003d: 3).

The first three modules of the FSST programme are presented in an initial three-day workshop, and deal with ‘Understanding SAMWU’, Disciplinary Procedures and Grievance Handling respectively⁵⁹. The three-day programme provides basic information about the union, training in specific tasks, introduces shop-stewards to the union’s constitution and centralised bargaining, and develops awareness of how mandates are arrived at. The union’s federation, COSATU, and issues of international worker solidarity and ‘building alliances’ are also touched on.

I observed Day 1 and Day 3 of a FSST programme, which dealt with ‘understanding the union’, and ‘disciplinary procedure’ respectively. (See Appendix 8 for an outline of the plan of this workshop). The facilitators were the

⁵⁸ Historically the vast majority of African workers in Cape Town originated in the Eastern Cape, and speak isiXhosa as a first language.

⁵⁹ Modules 4 and 5 focus on Collective Bargaining and Workplace Restructuring respectively (see Samwu 2004a and 2004b), and are delivered to shop-stewards in their second year of office.

PEO and three regional organisers. The PEO was a white, female university graduate with many years experience of political and labour activism, while all three organisers were coloured men who had emerged as worker leaders within a Cape Town-based clothing workers union, and had subsequently become employed as organisers within this municipal union. Participants comprised a very mixed group in terms of length of experience as a shop-steward and their location in the job hierarchy of the municipality. Most were Afrikaans-speaking, coloured workers. IsiXhosa-speakers (all men), and women workers were in the minority. Most participants seemed to understand English but many struggled with speaking and reading English. There was continuous translation into isiXhosa on Day 1, but none on Day 3.

The workshop was an occasion for the distribution of a variety of written materials, including a participants' manual and facilitator guide (in English, and Afrikaans, but not translated into isiXhosa) as well as activity sheets, handouts, the union's in-house magazine and the union's constitution (most of which were also in English).

Vignette 1: Shopsteward training workshop

Day 1 begins with 'participant expectations' and 'problems facing shop-stewards'. Many of the responses of participants are in the form of anecdotes, detailing their personal experiences. 'Problems' are perceived by shop-stewards largely in terms of power relations rather than problems of low wages or poor conditions of work. Somewhat to the concern of the PEO, shop-stewards do not seem to distinguish between problems at work (with management) and problems with the union (with union leadership). For example, one worker says:

My problem is my boss. She's a SAMWU member – she's a woman. My second problem is the union ... communication between the union and shop-stewards is not what it used to be.

After a lengthy session of taking reports from participants, the PEO concludes this session by emphasising that the union 'belongs' to its members, and shop-stewards need to be actively involved in solving workers' problems.

In the next session, participants are asked to 'number off' into groups, and discuss the questions: What are the problems facing workers? What is the role of the union? Why does management have power? Why should workers join the union? I observe one group where an experienced shop-steward moves into a facilitator role within the group, and communicates didactically to emphasise the values of the union to other group members. An isiXhosa-speaking participant in this group experiences difficulties in speaking fluently in English and says little. When asked to articulate his view on the issue of management power, he says: "Management has money – he can do anything; he can pay people... He can chase you...." Later, when his group reports back to plenary, his views are not included.

After lunch, the PEO gives the union's answers to the question of management power⁶⁰. She explains by means of a diagram – a triangle – the existence of classes under capitalism, and gives a materialist explanation of the political and ideological power of the capitalist state. She argues that the current South African state is complex in terms of its class composition because it is dominated by the ANC – a party that was historically a popular, liberation movement – but local government is increasingly acting like 'a private company'. Strikes and stoppages and the union itself are the weapons of workers in their struggle against the power of the capitalists and socialism is the long-term goal of workers' struggles.

The programme then goes on to look at the union's constitution and shop-stewards' duties. One of the organisers begins the session by talking about workers' control which he emphasises is an important principle of trade unionism. He then goes through the key points of the constitution, and tries to make the dry, legal language meaningful to the shop-stewards: he switches regularly between English and Afrikaans, draws on a rich, local humour, and draws on lots of examples embedded in participants' experiences. He emphasises a discourse of equality: no-one is immune from the rules of the union; everyone must learn from each other.

⁶⁰ Her analysis following closely the facilitator notes in the workshop resource package – see Appendix 9, point 5.

I return on day three of the workshop to a session focusing on how shop-stewards should defend members who have been accused of disciplinary offences. Two organisers are involved as facilitators, and they both use an 'instruction mode' of delivery creatively. One of the organisers works interactively with participants, posing and eliciting questions. In his answers, he constantly imparts the union's values and the fact that shop-stewards' roles should reflect these. The facilitators engage with participants' experience, use language and concrete example creatively, make frequent use of humour and model the language, mood, tone and gestures of the 'good shop-steward'. Both facilitators are experienced unionists with a great deal of expertise, but in addition to this, they also display the 'right' values and sympathy for workers' needs and concerns.

The isiXhosa-speaking participants are not participating much, and some don't seem to be following, even the humorous references. At lunchtime, I ask the shop-steward who acted as translator on Day 1 why he is no longer translating. He says he was asked "by comrades" to stop because it was taking too long. I ask him whether he thinks his isiXhosa-speaking comrades are following everything in English. He says no, but what can they do? The majority must decide – the minority have to be ruled by the majority.

Education programme 2: Collective bargaining workshop

Background

This was a two-day staff training workshop involving 24 organisers from around the country, including Cape Town branch organisers and office bearers. It was run by the National Education Officer (NEO), a white, male university graduate who had been involved in the union movement since the mid-1970s. He drew in others in an educational role, including the union's National Bargaining Officer (who had entered the union after a number of years of political leadership and activism in the Western Cape), a legal expert to talk about 'the law of strikes', and COSATU's parliamentary officer. The workshop was linked to a major planning process in which the union was engaged in anticipation of a national strike.

The programme focused on 'different levels of bargaining'; the bargaining role of Local Labour Forums; the state of national wage negotiations; 'the Law of Strikes', and 'preparing for a strike' (see Appendix 10 for an outline of the

workshop). Handouts included copies of the overhead transparencies and other documents including a lengthy research report on Local Labour Forums and economic information (of relevance to the union's wage demands) relating to market indicators, macro-economic policy, inflation and social policy. The whole education programme, including small group discussions and written documents, was in English.

Vignette 2: Collective bargaining workshop

The workshop begins with the NEO setting the context by over-viewing the different levels of bargaining that unions engage in, "... from the global to the local". His input paints a broad canvas ranging from national tri-partite institutions such as NEDLAC⁶¹ to global institutions such as the World Bank, the WTO⁶² and the ILO⁶³. It makes reference to national and international politics, the international economy, international law, and labour and constitutional law. Although the language used is not always specialised, participants are required not only to understand the references, but also have a critical understanding of issues involved. The input is delivered in the form of a lecture accompanied by use of the overhead projector. Anecdote is noticeably absent, and participants ask few questions when invited to do so, although they seem attentive and engaged. The presenter makes clear that although this contextual analysis is not the key focus of the workshop, "... it's important to appreciate the context".

This is followed by group discussions where participants have to identify where they – as union officials and worker leaders – are engaged in negotiating agreements. The NEO states that this is an information-gathering exercise: "I'm doing research here – you're my researchers – you've got to tell me what's happening on the ground"

After a group exercise focusing on the functioning of Local Labour Forums, the National Bargaining Officer (NBO) takes over the educator role. He presents a report on the state of national wage negotiations. Also using the overhead projector and traditional lecturing style, he presents a complex table comparing

⁶¹ National Economic Development and Labour Council – a tripartite policy and planning body.

⁶² World Trade Organisation.

⁶³ International Labour Organisation.

the contrasting positions of management and labour on a range of issues. His handouts include a long document which contains the employer body's motivations and arguments for restricted wage increases. He takes care to let participants see how and why positions have emerged, and this is one of the rare occasions that I observe in the union where a management point of view is elaborated, although the presenter takes issue with, and effectively demolishes each of the employer arguments. Questions from participants follow, probing employer strategies, the legal ramifications of a strike and potential union strategies.

The NBO gives a further presentation on the draw-backs of multi-year wage agreements, presenting details regarding the relative movements of wages and inflation. This is followed by intense engagement and many questions on the part of participants. They seem to be attempting to link together numerous different threads of information (on wages, job evaluation, essential services agreements, government regulations, macro-economics, unions' experiences elsewhere), in order to form a composite picture of the world that they face, and in order to be able to strategise effectively around a possible strike.

After lunch, participants engage in small group discussions probing a range of factors that could influence the success or otherwise of an impending strike: the state of communication in the union; the depth of feelings of workers regarding wage demands; the likely effect of a strike on the provision of essential services; and the degree of preparedness of members for a lengthy strike.

Education Programme 3: BEC debate on 'the ultra-left'

This event consisted of a workshop 'slot' within a formal Branch Executive Committee (BEC) meeting⁶⁴, attended by approximately 40 branch shop-stewards. The meeting put aside two hours for an educational session around an issue that was engaging the interest of union activists and which was enjoying considerable public and media interest at the time. The issue involved a debate taking place both within COSATU, and between COSATU and other 'alliance partners' around accusations of 'ultra-leftism' made by prominent ANC leaders against

⁶⁴ A fuller explanation of the BEC meeting will be given in the next chapter.

COSATU, specific unions within COSATU – SAMWU in particular – and against individuals or groups within these organisations.

Vignette 3: The ‘ultra-left’ debate

The workshop opens with presentations from a panel of two speakers – the General Secretary of the union, and the Regional Secretary of COSATU. The chairperson (the Branch Secretary) explains that an ANC speaker who was invited to participate in the panel has not arrived. Each speaker presents a lengthy input (totalling one-and-a-half hours in all) in English. The General Secretary’s input emphasises the importance of democratic debate, and criticises the way in which political ‘labelling’ is being used to stifle open debate. He draws on the classical Marxist literature of Lenin and Engels to put forward his view on the difference between an ultra-left, “no compromise” position on the one hand and a left-wing position of critical engagement on the other. The second speaker emphasises that COSATU is determined to be engaged in broader policy issues and will not be “confined to only factory floor dealings” as the ANC government seems to want. Both speakers make reference to a range of historical and current political processes, institutions and policies (including the Freedom Charter, RDP⁶⁵ and GEAR⁶⁶, NEDLAC and NEPAD⁶⁷).

Each participant receives a bound package of readings, divided into four sections: (i) ‘SAMWU Viewpoint’, an eight-page SAMWU discussion document; (ii) ‘ANC Viewpoint’, consisting of two articles totaling 45 pages in all; (iii) ‘COSATU Viewpoint’, consisting of two articles totaling 10 pages; and (iv) ‘SACP⁶⁸ Viewpoint’, a 16-page article – 69 pages in all (SAMWU, 2002a).

Analysis of pedagogy in union education programmes

Later chapters will show that a wide range of activities within the union have an impact on workers’ consciousness (amongst other functions). However, the

⁶⁵ Reconstruction and Development Programme.

⁶⁶ The ANC government’s macro-economic policy introduced in 1996, which has led to substantial cuts in social spending, forcing local government to look to the private sector as a way to finance and expand service delivery (McDonald and Smith, 2002: 28).

⁶⁷ New Economic Policy for African Development.

⁶⁸ South African Communist Party.

union's education programmes represent one space that is consciously and intentionally educational. A number of features characterising learning and teaching within union education programmes – and which vary across the different education events outlined here – will now be examined.

Educator and learner roles

A draft policy document on union education says in a section entitled, 'Who are the educators?': " ... every good union leader should be orientated to explaining, clarifying and educating" (SAMWU, 1996: 14)⁶⁹. In other words, the union sees all worker leaders as potentially playing the role of educators, and virtually every staff position as carrying an educational dimension⁷⁰.

However, the draft policy document argues that this 'general' role needs to be complemented by:

...a cadre of persons (officials and shopstewards) who are educated as trainers. To be an effective Educator requires a knowledge of educational methodologies, facilitation skills, planning skills and content knowledge which goes beyond this every day education through organisation. It is for this reason that it is argued that we have to "select" those who will act within a specific "worker educator portfolio". That it is not simply a matter of election but of assessment of the "educator orientation" of such persons. Too often in the past selection as educator has been a stepping stone to Branch or Regional Office bearer. Once loaded with such additional responsibilities the "Educator" lacks time for preparation – *there is an inevitable slide into top-down education*. Ideally persons selected as "Worker Educators" need to have a strong commitment to staying in such role over 2 or 3 years. Learning to be an Educator requires that a person practices educating on a consistent basis in a process of on going critical reflection on their practise (SAMWU, 1996: 14 – 15, emphasis added).

The role of union educator is often *only one* of the multiple roles of worker leaders⁷¹. But it is clear from the quote above that the union views the educator role as a specialised one, underpinned by a particular disposition, skills and knowledge, and requiring substantial experience.

⁶⁹ This policy document does not appear to have ever been formally adopted.

⁷⁰ The same document stresses that union staff – particularly organisers – also need to play a role as educators.

⁷¹ This echoes the findings of earlier research of trade union education across a wide range of unions (Cooper and Qotole, 1996: 35 – 58).

Union education programmes sometimes draw in ‘outside experts’ with highly specialised expertise⁷², but in the union education programmes described above, it was mainly full-time union staff that played an educator role. They play a key knowledge-dissemination role within the organisation by virtue of their involvement across a number of sites of practice both within the union as well outside of it, and as a result of their understanding of the broader context – a ‘grasp of the big picture’. They may be viewed as ‘boundary workers’⁷³ who play important mediating roles between the union and other communities of practice.

For example, the PEO and those playing educator roles in the Collective Bargaining workshop and the ‘Ultra-left’ debate drew on their years of experience as unionists, political activists, ‘organic intellectuals’ or previous university study. They also represent their union in (and bring information and perspectives from) a range of local, national and international labour forums⁷⁴. The labour law expertise of the organiser-facilitators in the FSST programme came not only from structured (but usually non-formal) study of the labour law⁷⁵ but also from years of experience ‘in the trenches’, in other words, from battles fought on behalf of their membership against management, first as shop-stewards and later as organisers. Shop-steward participants in the workshops outlined above also acted as repositories of memory, drawing on their experiences from other times in the history of the labour movement. These boundary workers therefore mediate expertise derived from membership of multiple communities of practice: intellectual expertise derived from formal study and membership of activist, intellectual groupings; historical experience and expertise based on experience in the workplace and in other unions; and membership of other communities of practice at the local, national and international level.

⁷² For example, in the Collective Bargaining workshop, a lawyer was drawn in to deal with the detail of labour laws pertaining to strikes

⁷³ Wenger uses the term ‘brokers’ to refer to those who participate in multiple communities of practice, and who introduce elements of one practice into another (Wenger, 1998: 105). I have misgivings about the entrepreneurial or commercial connotations of this term, and have therefore devised ‘boundary workers’ as an alternative term.

⁷⁴ For example, the local government bargaining council, the Central Executive Committee of COSATU, the Public Sector International.

⁷⁵ Many trade unionists complete short courses in labour law offered by their federation (eg. COSATU) or Ditsela (the national trade union training institute). The courses are usually non-certificated, except for some longer versions of such courses which may be offered in conjunction with a university law department.

All these experiences are sources of their epistemological authority. However, this does not rest on subject expertise alone: it always rests also on their understanding of the trade union context, and more importantly, on their *sharing the appropriate moral disposition and ideology* demanded of those working within this community of practice. In other words (and drawing on Bernstein, 1996: 28) they also have to have the 'right' regulative discourse. This view was supported in one of the full-time shop-steward interviews:

I think we have very good leadership... we really have people who we could look up to, and you could see through those people's actions that they are here to really to make that kind of change, in terms of workers and the broader working class (Interview 1).

There is therefore some degree of specialisation of the educator role in union education programmes, but this role is not nearly as strongly classified (in Bernstein's sense of being 'boundaried') as in the formal education system, and the boundaries between the union educator role and other leadership roles within the union are porous.

In even greater contrast to the formal education system, there is very little differentiation or specialization amongst learners on trade union programmes. In the formal education system, distributive rules⁷⁶ (Bernstein, 1996: 46) are closely related to learners' age and 'ability' (in the school context) or previous level of study (in the higher education context), while in the workplace, the knowledge and skills distributed usually depends on position within the job hierarchy. In the union however, no account is taken of previous level of study, and there is also very little difference in the knowledge transmitted to different levels of worker leadership (despite the union's apparent intention to 'introduce some degree of streaming' – SAMWU, 1996: 10). In the FSST workshop for example, there was a mixture of shop-stewards, ranging from those with years of experience to those who were very recently elected⁷⁷, and drawn from all levels within the municipal work hierarchy. Furthermore, in the FSST programme aimed at new shop-

⁷⁶ Distributive rules regulate what may be transmitted to whom, and under what conditions.

⁷⁷ Coetzee (2002) found that this resulted from the fact that the Union did not have a database of shopstewards and thus no ability to identify who had had previous training, and who had not. She also found that this mix of 'levels' of experience created problems in FSST training programmes, with the more experienced shopstewards tending to dominate discussions (Coetzee, 2002: 20).

stewards and the Collective Bargaining workshop aimed at experienced organisers employed by the union, very similar materials were used to introduce concepts around understanding the political economy. These concepts were relatively broad and abstract, and included: ‘defining wealth and value’; ‘how value is produced’; ‘resources and means of production’; ‘what are capitalism, free enterprise and markets’; and ‘what are profit, commodities, labour markets and the global labour market’ (SAMWU, 2004a).

In the Ultra-left debate, branch-level shop-stewards were exposed to history, political theory and current political economy, as the panelists sought to help them to contextualise current political debates. In the union’s ‘Political Education’ handbook, aimed at the union’s broad, *general* membership, a chapter dealing with ‘The development of capitalism in South Africa’ includes a philosophical section on ‘Tools of Social Analysis’. This explores the relationship between experience and theory, why tools of analysis are important to guide action, and introduces two ‘basic views of the world’ – Liberal and Marxist (SAMWU, 2002/3: 62-63). There seems to be an assumption therefore that workers should develop not only some basic concepts of political economy, but also of philosophy.

Harris, in her study of RPL in a South African university, draws on Bernstein’s notion of ‘distributive rules’ to argue that some adult students have a headstart in acquiring academic discourse because of their history of political activism in the 1980s, where:

patterns of circulation of vertical discourse in South African ‘struggle’ contexts were different... Vertical discourse was the possession not solely of the intellectual-academic elite, but also of the intellectual-political elite, where the aim was to broaden the group ‘reservoir’ to effect political change... My claim is that the political circumstances of the time changed the distributive rules of vertical discourse ... (Harris, 2004: 74 – 75).

My argument is that the distributive rules of union education programmes operate in a similar way. Within the formal education system, the union’s learners – all from working class backgrounds – may never have been given the opportunity to engage with the economic, sociological, political or philosophical issues outlined above. The union’s education programmes however require that all members – irrespective of their prior education or ‘ability’ – acquire selected elements of

formal knowledge systems for the purposes of equipping them to bring about social change both in the workplace, and beyond.

Forms of pedagogy

What forms of pedagogy are used to transmit knowledge in union education programmes, and what are their associated methodologies? This section draws on Bernstein's notions of visible and invisible modes of pedagogy (Bernstein, 1996: 28) and competence and performance models of pedagogy (Bernstein, 1996: 58; 65) to argue that union pedagogy is a complex mix of different forms of pedagogy.

Visible and invisible pedagogy

The union's policy documents and the actual design of its programmes reflect a 'learner centred' approach and foreground group work and learning activities. For example, in the extract from the union's draft policy document on education quoted above, the italicised phrase ('there is an inevitable slide into top-down education') suggests that the union's approach to education opposes the notion of 'top-down education'. The FSST training manual's notes for facilitators includes a section entitled "Adult Education", which contains a wide variety of 'ice-breakers' and 'energisers', an extract on the 'Experiential Learning Cycle' approach to 'How Adults Learn', and suggestions that appropriate methods should include role plays, simulation games, case studies, 'sculptoring' and buzz groups. Another extract on 'The Learning Climate' emphasises that the facilitator should avoid letting participants 'sit in straight rows' as this will have a negative effect on participation, and gives guidelines for promoting participation in groups. A final extract on 'facilitation skills' promotes a radical humanist approach to education which emphasises that the facilitator must 'encourage democracy and be non-directive', be as 'invisible' as possible, and 'ensure an equal power relationship between all the participants and the facilitator' (SAMWU, 2003d). Coetzee's research on SAMWU's Cape Town branch found also that "Educators seem committed to a participatory approach to learning and stress the importance of " 'the collective' in learning..." (Coetzee, 2002: 19). She concluded that educators' descriptions of their education practice "fit within Freirian principles of problem-posing education, where teachers and learners are 'critical co-

investigators” and that the FSST programme as a whole was informed by an ‘Experiential Learning’ approach (Coetzee, 2002: 24).

This participatory, learner-centred approach to pedagogy was enacted in a number of the education events that I observed, particularly in the extensive use made of small group work involving problem-solving exercises centred around scenarios crafted from real life events. A principle of reciprocity between educator and learners was also explicitly communicated by one of the organisers in the FSST (speaking in Afrikaans):

I have to learn from you, just as I have to educate you. You have to tell me what you need to learn.

Bernstein would describe this participatory, learner-centred pedagogy as a competence model of pedagogy that operates with forms of invisible pedagogy (1996: 65). Competence models of pedagogy purport to operate on the basis of a non-hierarchical relationship between educator and learner; they affirm individual potential and lay emphasis on the learner’s control over their own, inner development; the educator plays an ‘invisible’, facilitative role; and learners draw on ‘everyday’ experiences as sources of knowledge. The union’s pedagogy might best be seen as an example of the ‘radical’ form of competence pedagogy, where ‘competence’ is seen as the collective property of an oppressed group, and where the focus of pedagogy is on social change and redress (Bernstein, 1996: 64).

However, the curriculum of the union’s FSST programme is far from non-directive; power is masked by the programme’s many learner-centred activities, but these activities function to powerfully communicate the values, principles and ideology of the union as a community of practice. Many of the activities in the FSST programme draw on, or connect with learners’ experiences (in fact, they often take learners’ experiences as their starting point), but they have pre-determined outcomes and the learning criteria are very explicit. For example, in the facilitator notes of the FSST manual, 13 out of the 18 group activities designed for use on the first day of the programme begin with participants reflecting on their own experiences; but in the case of eight of these 13 activities, the facilitator is *also* given very clear guidelines as to what learning outcomes are to be achieved. (This is also true of all activities in the section of the manual dealing with ‘Grievance Procedures’ as well as those dealing with ‘Disciplinary

Offences’.) For example, in the facilitator notes for the group exercise dealing with “Why does management have power” (see Appendix 9), the facilitator is instructed to ask shop-stewards to brainstorm “why workers are in a weak position relative to the employers”; following that, the instructions read: “You will get a range of responses. Through an input you need to consolidate these responses so that some of these key points emerge ...” (SAMWU, 2003d: 14). The notes then go on to outline the key points the PEO covered in her input on the first day of the FSST workshop. Elsewhere, in an activity on how shop-stewards represent workers’ interests in the workplace, the facilitator is advised:

There are a number of key points that need to be made during this session. You can make some of the points through an input, and you can make some of them through activities. The best would be to use a combination of inputs, activities, and summarising key points after the activities, to make sure the important points are made (SAMWU, 2003d: 26).

This illustrates Kane’s point (2001: 161) that questions are not necessarily any more ideologically neutral than are statements.

What was also striking from my observations of these union education events was that the more predominant form of pedagogy *in practice* was far from invisible or non-directive, and took the form of traditional, didactic styles of teaching (what Bernstein, 1996: 65 has termed, visible or performance pedagogy) – often involving the delivery of ‘inputs’ followed by questions – and explicit, pre-stated outcomes. Didactic forms of pedagogy were frequently echoed in the responses of participants, possibly reflecting forms of teaching which have predominated in their own learning histories. For example, on the first day of the FSST workshop the translator engaged in lengthy oratory and his style of delivery was distinctly sermon-like, possibly reflecting strong church influences in his own learning history.

In the Collective Bargaining workshop, didactic inputs were aimed at imparting contextual information that could help to draw connections between political, economic and historical developments at a global and local level. Didactic interventions also make possible the transmission of principles and procedures (for example, of labour law or the union’s constitution), as well as roles and identities. This was illustrated during an ‘education slot’ of a shop-stewards area

committee meeting⁷⁸ (a meeting that will be elaborated upon in the next chapter). This hour-long session was aimed at reinforcing and deepening shop-stewards' learnings from the FSST programme. An organiser was running the session and a discussion was under way on how to defend workers guilty of disciplinary offences without the shop-steward compromising his or her own integrity. The organiser, speaking from the stage, emphasised:

You can't refuse a member – you must try to find a way even if you know he's guilty. But if he continues transgressing regularly you have to warn him that he can't carry on like this....

He pushed participants to think for themselves, posing questions and demanding answers (and switching regularly between English and Afrikaans):

Wat doen jy in geval waar jy het 'opgeslip' (*what do you do when you realize you've slipped up*) – you realise you haven't gathered the necessary information? Reuben what will you do? ... Comrades, there's something missing here, and you guys have not picked it up. Something that almal gemis het... (*Something that everyone has missed*).

He eventually answered his own question, clearly and emphatically:

You request information from management including a witness list. Comrades I want you to take note of this. The moment you get a charge sheet from management, you request statements, witnesses, everything they've got ... and based on that information comrades, you take your statements and prepare yourself.

Chapter 7 will return to a fuller discussion on the implications of this 'mixed pallet' of forms of pedagogy in union education programmes: the combination of a stated commitment to, and partial enactment of, competence pedagogy (learner-centred, participatory in orientation, where the educator purportedly plays a non-directive role), and the predominance of performance pedagogy in terms of both workshop materials and educational practice (where the educator visibly intervenes to instruct learners and transmit key understandings). For the moment however, it is important to note that didactic interventions not only transmit information and skills: they also act to transmit a very strong ideological message.

⁷⁸

Tygerberg Shop-steward Area Committee meeting, 12 June, 2001.

Directive Pedagogy: shaping roles, identities and values

Whether overtly didactic or more facilitative, union pedagogy is essentially a class-based, identity-building, ideological and political project. The education events that I observed involved the transmission of large amounts of information, but more importantly, they were aimed at imparting key values and constructing particular roles and identities⁷⁹. In other words, this activity system has a very strong regulative discourse (Bernstein, 1996: 28) and its 'rules of social order' are explicitly and powerfully communicated through its pedagogy.

The identity-construction role of union education was strongest in the union's shop-steward training programme. Here, one of the key tasks of the union educator is to reconstruct the 'workplace' identity of the new shop-steward into a 'unionist' identity. This involves inducting participants into the values and principles of the union as a workers' organisation and their roles as shop-stewards, a role that involves demanding new power relations on the shop floor as well as within the union. This was illustrated when the PEO emphasised to shop-stewards:

The union is not that building over there.... It is you and the workers... what we want is a union where workers are involved in the decision-making....

It was also evident when one of the organisers running the session on 'What is SAMWU?' emphasised:

Don't open your books. I want to talk to you about workers' control. The union official doesn't have power. You must tell me what to do You have to take control of the situation, both at the office and at the workplace. Power is not in the trade union office ... (it lies in your) ability to take responsibility for union affairs.... Officials and POBs⁸⁰ are all open to discipline. It is not the case that 'ons kannie aangeraak nie' (*that we can't be touched*)....

⁷⁹ This finding is echoed in Coetzee's evaluation of the Cape Metro branch FSST programme; she found that the programme was not very successful in communicating 'content' (eg. the details of the union's structure and constitution), but was far more successful in imparting to shop-stewards an "understanding of their role" (Coetzee 2002: 10 – 12).

⁸⁰ Provincial Office Bearers – workers who are elected into leadership positions within the Province.

The ideological directedness of the FSST programme was evident not only in the PEO's explicit critique of 'classes under capitalism', but was also embedded in the questions for group discussion on the first morning of the FSST programme ("What are the problems facing workers? What is the role of the union? Why does management have power? Why should workers join the union?"). Both the 'political education' components of the FSST and the Ultra-left Debate workshop explicitly promoted a particular world view which challenged the class-based structure of a society based on unequal distribution of wealth and power:

...we live in a society made up of two classes – there's a class that rules and there's a class like us who sells our labour to those classes that owns the factories, that owns the mines, that owns the means of production. There are two classes in society – two primary classes (General Secretary, Ultra-left Debate).

The values transmitted through union pedagogy emphasise the interest of the collective. At the basis of the union as a worker organisation is the assumption that it is only through uniting and acting in combination that workers are able to realise their collective power. Hence the strong emphasis in the FSST workshop and Depot-level workshops on exploring and identifying the common experiences and problems of workers, which provide the raw material around which their collective identity can begin to be built. In all these workshops, it was stressed that this collective identity extends beyond the union (and potentially includes members of the rival union, IMATU), as well as beyond the factory floor, to include members of the working class – both nationally and globally. This broader, working class identity is based not only on commonality but also has to embrace difference:

For us in the trade union movement ... we have comrades from different political perspectives.... The single feature uniting us is that we're workers ... we all have the common feature of being workers and we must create the space in our union for people of different political perspectives (General secretary, Ultra-left debate)

Even though the dissemination of knowledge in the workshop context is embedded within a powerful ideological discourse, it would be wrong to assume that union members are only concerned with knowledge that is 'ideologically correct', and that they are not concerned with the validity of knowledge – 'with getting to the truth'. Union members, shop-stewards and full-time staff, are deeply

concerned with questions about the validity of the information and knowledge that they deal with, and draw on many familiar conventions of validating knowledge. For example, having thoroughly researched evidence was viewed as important: in the FSST Module 5 manual (dealing with workplace restructuring) a section on “Getting the facts clear” argues that:

Full and proper information is the foundation for consultation and/or negotiation of a plan. All information needs to be questioned. What does it say? Is something missing? What if you break it down in another way? (SAMWU, 2004b: 47)

The Module 4 Handbook advises shop-stewards that “Fighting disputes in a process of Arbitration requires good arguments and solid information” (SAMWU, 2004a: 51). In the FSST workshop, the facilitator in the session on disciplinary procedure also stressed: “These are the facts – you’re not going to negotiate the facts.... You’ve either got a case or not.” Having well researched evidence – access to ‘the facts’ – was seen as even more important today than in earlier periods of the labour movement, as illustrated in the words of one of the facilitators: “There were days ... we could toyi-toyi – now things have changed. We have to put our facts on the table.”

At the same time however, there is also an appreciation that ‘facts’ do not exist outside of a social context and that knowledge is a site of struggle in itself. For example, the FSST Module 5 Manual argues:

We live in the information age. Control over information and the manipulation of knowledge has become a central tool in the hands of those who hold power in the economy and society. Knowledge and information about ‘markets’ and ‘economic indicators’ on a global scale give multi-national companies new power.... (SAMWU, 2004d: 41)

This section of the chapter has argued that union pedagogy is a ‘mixed pallet’ of competence and performance models, and visible and invisible forms of pedagogy, but with performance models, and visible forms of pedagogy predominating. Union education programmes play a powerful identity-construction role and transmit a strong, counter-hegemonic ideological message. This feature – the ideological directedness of union pedagogy – helps to explain the tension between its stated commitment to ‘popular education methodology’ on the one hand, and its actual pedagogic practice on the other, which is often very

didactic. However, the union's strong ideological message is not simply imposed in a 'top-down' manner. There exists a commitment to reciprocal relations between educators and learners, and the role of educator is a fluid one, with worker leaders often stepping into this role. Furthermore, significant attempts are made by educators to 'reach' the experiences of the workers who are participants in the union's programmes, and to integrate the union's political ideology with their experiences. One way in which educators attempt to 'reach' workers' experiences is through the use of participatory, learning activities. However, an equally significant way is through the use of a range of culturally-embedded, symbolic tools of mediation.

Symbolic tools of mediation

While Bernstein's conceptual language proved useful in distinguishing between different forms of trade union pedagogy, the Vygotskian notion of tools of mediation was indispensable in understanding how these particular pedagogic forms function or are actually put to use in the trade union context.

Union pedagogy is characterised by the use of a very rich variety of symbolic tools of mediation that assist and promote processes of learning. These features of pedagogy include: an emphasis on oral forms of communication, the use of performance, modeling, 'embodied' forms of communication and story-telling, and the mediating roles of emotion and humour. Physically observing union education events provided important insights into the role played by culturally-embedded tools of mediation.

Written text and orality

Forms of written text played an important role in the three workshops observed. In the FSST, there were educator and participant manuals which provided background information as well as copies of materials used in the workshop⁸¹. Scattered around the training room was a range of further visual and text images, including a union attache-bag with the slogan: "Transform Local Government,

⁸¹ Background information focused on the history and structures of the union, the structure of capitalist society, the 'national and international political and economic context', notes and resources on 'Adult Education' and 'facilitator skills' (SAMWU 2003d).

Crush Poverty, Advance to Socialism”; an ANC T-shirt with a picture of Mbeki⁸², and a union T-shirt with the slogan: “Keep Local Government in the Hands of the People”. In the Collective Bargaining workshop, participants received a large package of materials, while in the Ultra-left debate, a package of readings (providing different perspectives on the debate) had been distributed to participants some time beforehand. The speakers in this debate regularly referred to them, and acknowledged the complaints from one participant (clearly supported by others) about the inaccessibility of many of the readings.

In addition to the role played by text in the learning processes inside workshops, it became clear that text also assumes importance in the process and skills needed outside of workshops. Some of the skills into which the shop-stewards were being inducted are strongly text-based; for example, in the session on ‘grievance handling’, the organiser stressed the importance of making copies of forms, getting management to sign these copies and properly managing all the written information collected, and he emphasised that the success of such cases depends largely on what is put down in writing.

The union’s education programmes seem both to require and assume a culture of reading and writing on the part of its membership and shop-stewards in particular. However, both requirement and assumption are questionable, even in the union’s own assessment. In a 1996 review of its educational programmes, the union acknowledged “Problems arising from the basic educational level of shopstewards such as high levels of illiteracy/numeracy and disadvantaged educational background and accordingly limited ability for further learning” (SAMWU, 1996: 3)⁸³. In addition, a recent organisational review of the union argues that:

There is a definite problem of shopstewards who can read, failing to read and to educate themselves. This is a vital component of leadership development, communication, and the building of an informed democratic organisation. Without a ‘culture of reading’ our formal courses are not consolidated. The attempts to cultivate a culture of reading groups or

⁸² President of South Africa, and of the ruling ANC party.

⁸³ The document argued that the union does not have the capacity to address both officials and workers’ needs for basic literacy and numeracy education, but that pressure needed to be put on management to increase provision of Adult Basic Education and Training in the workplace. It did, however, acknowledge that all its courses could “include elements of the development of such basic skills” (SAMWU, 1996: 11).

political policy discussion forums have not succeeded but must be continued (SAMWU, 2003a: 19).

The prevalence of written text in union education programmes coexists with a communicative culture which is deeply oral. As one shop-steward noted in one of the focus-group interviews: “Everyone in our culture is a storyteller. It’s not that writing is not important – but ours is an oral culture. I can convince people by word of mouth...” (Focus Group Interview (FGI) 1).

Oral forms of communication are seen as important to complement the use of written text, and face-to-face communication is strongly preferred. For example, these were some of the conclusions put forward by organising staff in the Collective Bargaining workshop when they debated how to report back to workers on the outcome of the union’s wage negotiations:

- Pamphlets don’t answer questions. Shop-stewards are phoning with questions....
- Yes, some shop-stewards can give out pamphlets but they don’t fully understand... You have to be there....
- A telephone report is inadequate – the hearer can distort it entirely. The proper way is going physically to make a report....
- By being there physically, new members are coming in. As long as they see an organiser they’re happy ... as soon as you go away, there’s no organisation....
- In my branch ... I don’t take shop-stewards and worker leaders truly in what they are saying (that workers are not ready to strike). I want to go physically – to assess myself....

There is therefore a firmly held view that no form of written communication is entirely reliable, and not even ‘distance’ modes of oral communication (such as the telephone, or reports from others) can effectively substitute for ‘the physical presence’ of face-to-face, oral communication.

Educators also expressed misgivings about the ‘inertia’ of written text; for example, when asked whether he uses the FSST manual in his training workshops, one educator answered:

I dipped in when necessary ... it’s a problem if you use the book too strictly. People are confined to the book without looking around them. I feel let’s close the book and deal with reality as it is always changing in a union context (quoted in Coetzee, 2002: 22).

What was particularly striking in some of these workshops was the use of rich forms of oral communication. What follows is a consideration of a number of distinctive ways in which language was used in the workshops – ways that are arguably crucial to the identity-building process at the heart of union pedagogy.

A pedagogic speech genre

For an educational context which is markedly multilingual (where in most cases, workshop participants share up to three different home languages, and sometimes more) there was surprisingly little language translation taking place in the workshops observed. Translation was stopped after the first day of the FSST, and there was no translation at all in the Ultra-left Debate or Collective Bargaining workshop.

The implications of this absence of regular translation will be considered later. For the moment however, it is interesting to note the very creative ways in which language was used in the FSST programme (but notably not in the Ultra-left Debate or Collective Bargaining workshops which were both viewed as ‘leadership’ training, and where written text was more fore-grounded). The prevalence of code-switching⁸⁴ in particular signals the use of a specific speech genre which may possibly perform the same inclusionary function as more regular forms of translation in union education programmes.

The continual use of code-switching (from English to Afrikaans and vice versa) was striking in the FSST programme. For example, during the debate around ‘Why does management have power?’, the facilitator intervened when two groups responded that it is because ‘management is more educated’; he asked:

⁸⁴ Slabbert and Finlayson (2002: 235) define code-switching as “Switching languages or linguistic varieties within the same conversation”.

Does more education mean: this oke is slimmer as ek? (*this guy is cleverer than me?*)”.

Elsewhere, he declared:

...’n Huis sonder ’n bybel is nie ’n huis nie.... (*A house without a bible is not a house...*). Each and every shop-steward must have a Constitution in order to understand how the union functions.

A Western Cape, working-class dialect of Afrikaans was often used for the particular, the vivid example and the mobilisation of personal and emotional resources, while English was used for the more formal, the more distanced and the more abstract. For example, another organiser-facilitator in the FSST programme spoke in English when explaining a more abstract legal point, but switched to Afrikaans when dealing with how the shop-steward should fight this particular case.

How should the pedagogic significance of this code-switching be understood? As noted in Chapter 2, Bakhtin (1965/1994: 87) argued that our particular use of language ‘anticipates a response’ of a particular kind. The use of particular language codes or speech genres may therefore be seen as having a pedagogic function in that they help to affirm and shape the identity of the listener. In other words, code-switching plays an important pedagogic role not only in building inclusivity but also in signalling values which are important to this community of practice and in constructing identity. The use of particular ‘codes’ when dealing with particular kinds of knowledge (for example, personal and emotional versus more abstract or legal knowledge) suggests that code-switching may be used by educators to help learners to mediate transitions between different forms of knowledge.

There are other distinctive features of the union pedagogic speech genre. For example, some of the education workshops were characterised by the frequent use of story-telling and anecdotes. In the FSST training, participants often used personal anecdotes to answer questions posed by the facilitator, and posed questions around scenarios drawn from their own experience in order to deepen their understanding of the broad principles of labour law. Facilitators in the shop-steward training workshop and in the Ultra-left debate also made use of story-telling and anecdote, in order to illustrate more general, abstract points. In other

words, the purpose of the storytelling was not simply personal or anecdotal, but analytical and conceptual (Mink, 1987).

In all the workshops described above, presenters and facilitators frequently infused their inputs with humour in a form that was embedded in the local, working class language and culture of this region. Humour provided a means for educators to 'reach' the experiences of the worker-participants and sardonic, political humour helped to build political identity and conscript participants to the union's values and world view. For example, in the Ultra-left Debate, the first speaker ridiculed those who accused the union of being 'ultra-left':

The ANC youth league says: it's very difficult to identify who the ultra left is but we know them by their actions and by their tactics and by their words. But when you say now who is the ultra left? They can't tell you who the ultra left (is) ... All they say is: we'll know them when we see them, but they can't tell us anything more than that [laughter].

Humorous comments often accompanied criticisms of union officials and humour appeared to play an important role in moderating the power relations and tensions that permeate union events. For example, in the FSST workshop, one of the organiser-facilitators argued that shop-stewards 'have to discipline' organisers, and there was great jocularly as shop-stewards swapped anecdotes about the 'excuses' that organisers give for not fulfilling their tasks.

Bakhtin argues that in addition to language, 'the body' – besides having a material existence and an instrumental function – can also act as a sign (Bakhtin, 1965/1994: 205), thus playing a role in symbolic mediation. The next section will show how there was a great deal of 'mode-switching' (Kress, 2000) between oral and more visual forms of communication in union workshops, and that 'performance' plays an important symbolic role in many instances of union pedagogy.

'Embodied' performance

Performance (meant literally as 'drama' or 'acting') plays a ubiquitous and important role in the FSST programme – involving forms of teaching and learning that are deeply 'embodied' and 'impassioned' – but not in the other two programmes.

In the FSST workshop, modelling played an important role in inducting new shop-stewards into their new roles. This was clear in the case of the two organisers who both presented embodied performances, using creative language and body language. One organiser strutted up and down, giving life to the ‘belligerent shop-steward role’, while the second organiser role-played the language, the mood, the tone, the gestures of the ‘good shop-steward’. These embodied modes of communication were also used by workshop participants who were not formally viewed as playing a mediating role, but who did so nevertheless. For example, the isiXhosa translator in the FSST workshop engaged in an animated way, often using his hands dramatically and emphasising points by gesticulating forcefully with his fore-finger. In these examples, embodied forms of pedagogy powerfully communicate the union’s rules of practice and reinforce the transmission of the union’s pedagogic message that is ideologically partisan and subversive of ‘official’ authority.

It was noted earlier that the epistemological authority of the union educator rests not only on specialised knowledge of some kind, but also on having the ‘right’ regulative discourse. It is my argument that the successful trade union educator *also* has to have knowledge of the culturally embedded tools of mediation most in use in this context, and the ability to use devices such as code-switching or mode-switching to mediate between workers’ experiences and specialised, formal bodies of knowledge.

This section has shown that although written text is prevalent in union education, the communicative culture of trade union education programmes is a deeply oral and performative one. Culturally-embedded tools of mediation involving creative language such as code-switching and story-telling, as well as ‘embodied’ forms of communication such as performance and modelling – often saturated with emotion and humour – play pedagogic roles in a number of ways. They play an inclusionary role, helping to construct identity, mediate transitions between different forms of knowledge, provide a means for educators to ‘reach’ the experiences of the worker-participants and conscript participants to an ideology which is partisan towards the working class and subversive of ‘official’ authority.

Thus far, this chapter has focused on the ‘how’ of union pedagogy. What of the ‘what’ of union pedagogy? What kinds of knowledge are recruited in union

pedagogy and perceived to be of value, and what are the sources of epistemological authority? How do different forms of knowledge articulate with one another, and what in particular is the relationship between knowledge derived from workers' own experiences, and that derived from outside of their experience?

Knowledge in union education programmes

A diversity of knowledge forms

There is a pre-planned or set curriculum in union education programmes – a clearly identified body of knowledge that has to be transmitted. These education programmes are directed at developing the procedural knowledge deemed necessary to defend and advance the interests of workers in the workplace as well as developing a strategic understanding of the current social context in order to change it. For these purposes, many different kinds of knowledge are recruited.

Educators engage significantly with participants' 'every-day' experiential knowledge (Bernstein's 'horizontal discourses'). The value placed on workers' experiential knowledge was evident in the numerous group exercises in the FSST and Collective Bargaining education programmes which took participants' experiences as their starting point, and in the frequent instances when educators used concrete example as well as linguistic and performative strategies to 'reach' the experiences of workers. It is problematic however to categorise workers' experiential knowledge in dualist terms. The experiential knowledge of workers is not only concrete and practical but also theoretical and conceptual. Workers engaged in theorising their world even when they did not 'name' the concepts or deploy specialist language. This could be seen in the example of one worker's answer to the question of why management has power: "Management has money – he can do anything; he can pay people.... He can chase you...." Storytelling and humour also sometimes substituted for the use of specialised, conceptual language and helped to make broad points about inequalities in society.

However, these education programmes also draw on elements of formal knowledge systems that are more 'hierarchical' in structure, or that have specialised language systems to describe concepts (Bernstein's 'vertical

discourses'). Unlike formal education, union education does not transmit this knowledge as a hierarchical set of principles or systematic set of interrelated concepts but rather 'borrows' elements of the specialised languages of these knowledge discourses, making pragmatic use of selected concepts. For example, in the Collective Bargaining workshop, participants were provided with information around national and international politics, the international economy, international law, and labour and constitutional law. In the Ultra-left debate, shop-stewards were exposed to history, political theory, and the current national and global political economy, while in the FSST programme, new shop-stewards had to learn key principles of labour law and elements of social theory. 'History' was valued as a source of knowledge more generally: in one of the activities in the FSST education programme entitled 'Learning from history', participants were asked to read through numerous historical extracts⁸⁵ so that they could "use history to develop an understanding of what a trade union is and what the principles underlying a democratic union are" (SAMWU, 2003d: 16).

'Weaving together' different forms of knowledge

How do these different forms of knowledge articulate? My observations show that knowledge of different kinds and derived from different sources are 'woven together' to produce hybrid forms of knowledge. This happens in a number of interesting ways.

In the FSST programme and the Collective Bargaining workshops, participants were invited to share and reflect critically on their experiences, out of which they were expected to distil key understandings (the inductive use of experience). This involved a movement from the particular to the general, sometimes – but not always – with the use of more specialised languages. More often however, 'local experience' was used *illustratively* to explain broader theoretical or conceptual points through a process of successive 'layering' of experiential and conceptual knowledge. Here 'experience' was used to scaffold the movement from the particular example to broader concepts (what Breier, 2003 – drawing on Dowling's work – refers to as 'generalising strategies'). For example, in the FSST

⁸⁵ These included quotes of workers during the 1973 strikes; a Fosatu spokesperson on the meaning of 'worker control'; and COSATU speeches during the mid 1980s on democracy.

workshop the PEO theorised workers' experiences, and introduced some specialised language:

PEO: Why does management have power? Why do workers need protection...? It is management and employers against the workers. So why do we need a union?

SS1: So that workers can also have a voice....

PEO: Why is it so difficult for workers to have their say? Who here has worked in a factory?

One worker who worked in an ammunition factory says of the employer: Hy is sy eie baas (*he is his own boss*).

PEO: He owns the means of production – the machines, electricity, buildings, and the workers – he takes what you produce – and goes and sells it at a profit.

This dialectical movement back and forth between more abstract, conceptual knowledge and experiential, 'local' forms of knowledge – what I am describing as the 'weaving together' of different forms of knowledge – was also evident in a multi-voiced dialogue in the FSST workshop, where a sociological question around what 'counts' as democratic was answered by recontextualising it both colloquially (and by use of humour, code-switching and the use of insulting language), as well as by elaborating examples of the concept of 'democracy':

Ss1: Is IMATU run on a democratic basis?

Ss2: No, they are sucking up to the employers...

isiXhosa translator: They are not reporting back to the grassroots...

Facilitator: They make decisions in Exco that no members have any input into...

Ss3: Hulle is ingepomp in hulle breine... (*they are stuffed in their brains...*)

What this suggests is that knowledge in the non-formal education setting of the trade union is far from undifferentiated, and one of its most distinct features is its hybridity. This hybridity is promoted by the dialectical movement back and forth between different forms of knowledge; I have argued that culturally-embedded tools of mediation in union education programmes – and the use of code-switching and mode-switching in particular – may play an important role in facilitating movement between different forms of knowledge, and between local experience and general principles. However, there remains a tension between on the one hand, valuing workers' experiential knowledge, and on the other, the union leadership's use of education programmes to transmit strategic information or information about the union's political policies and ideological perspectives.

This tension or ambiguity is reflected in the ‘mix’ of competence and performance pedagogy in union education practice, and the fact that workers’ experiential knowledge is used mainly instrumentally – to scaffold the learning of pre-determined outcomes – rather than as a source of knowledge in its own right.

The social purpose of union education programmes

Challenging hegemonic power relations

The union’s education programmes are integrally linked to the broader social purpose of trade unions. As noted in Chapter 1, historically in South Africa one of the key goals of the democratic trade union movement has been to challenge hegemonic power relations both on the shopfloor, as well as in society more broadly. In my SAMWU case study, this social purpose continues to be reflected in the stated goals of this union’s education programmes, which (as noted earlier) is centred on “building collective working class power” (SAMWU, 1996: 6).

The union’s radical, counter-hegemonic orientation finds expression in a powerful ideological discourse that permeated all education events observed. This ideology also finds expression in the union’s education materials which explicitly critique hegemonic knowledge-power relations. For example, the FSST Module 5 manual says that formal education systems:

... provided better education to the wealthy and second class education to the working class. It schooled people to accept that capitalist inequality is natural and the only way to order society... Education is also about social control and socialisation. The major purpose of formal education systems has never been to develop critical thought (SAMWU, 2004b: 40).

The counter-hegemonic thrust of the union’s ideology is also echoed in the union’s promotion of reciprocal relations between facilitators and participants (‘everyone is both learner and educator’) and there were a number of occasions where participants – for example, the more experienced shop-stewards in the FSST- challenged the facilitators’ judgements or interpretation of labour law.

An orientation towards challenging hegemonic power was also expressed in the ‘everyday’ experiences of workers. In these education events, workers frequently and explicitly critiqued not only the material inequalities they experience in the

workplace, but also the unilateral exercise of power of management over workers. In other words, although the union's education programmes are an important vehicle for communicating theorised views of the world and the 'rules of practice' of the union from the leadership down to members, they also provide a space for the channelling of views from ordinary union members upwards to the leadership levels of the union. For example, the FSST workshop acted as a forum for workers to vent their frustrations over many aspects of the functioning of the union: "When you phone the office for assistance – people are not there, you can't get hold of them" or "Union meetings starting very late; when we have our AGMs⁸⁶ we have political speakers who speak for hours ... instead of dealing with union matters...."

However, power relations within the union are complex and multi-faceted. Workshops act not only as a space for workers to make their voices heard, but they also afford the opportunity for 'surveillance'⁸⁷ by the leadership of the organisation, giving them an intimate view of 'conditions on the ground'. For example, in the Collective Bargaining workshop, the NEO explicitly acknowledged the workshop's information-gathering role in relation to whether the union structures are working or not, how well shop-stewards are performing their roles and the preparedness of workers to strike: "I'm doing research here – you're my researchers – you've got to tell me what's happening on the ground...."

Reflecting and reproducing dominant power relations

The union's primary objective is to challenge (and ultimately transform) relations of oppression and exploitation, and this is reflected in the fact that union pedagogy is overtly ideological and challenging of hegemonic power relations. However, as an organisation of civil society the union does not exist outside of hegemonic power relations but is also implicated in those power relations. For example, much of the union's shop-steward training programme is aimed at providing information and skills for shop-stewards to negotiate with management within the limitations imposed by the capitalist workplace. Thus union training is mixed with pragmatism and it inducts shop-stewards and staff into roles that

⁸⁶ Annual General Meetings.

⁸⁷ 'Surveillance' is used here in the Foucauldian sense (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 67).

involve accepting some elements of management's power. The broader social role of union education programmes is therefore characterised by a complex articulation of both resistance and accommodation.

Furthermore, dominant power relations are both reflected and reproduced within union education programmes. One way in which power relations are reproduced is through the use of particular tools of mediation. The use of language in these programmes reflects the predominance of coloured workers and under-representation of African workers within the union, and acts not only to include but also to exclude. This was most noticeable in the issue around the absence of translation. As noted above, in the FSST there was some translation into isiXhosa on the first day of the programme, but this had been stopped by the second day (because of 'time constraints') despite the fact that many participants struggled to use English fluently. The vast bulk of written education materials used in the FSST programme was available only in English⁸⁸, although most participants struggled to read written text in English. These problems were recognized by Coetzee in her evaluation of FSST in the Cape Town branch, where she found that many shop-stewards have literacy difficulties, and that:

Both educators and shop stewards note that language played a significant role influencing participation. It was felt that people were not comfortable speaking in English (the second language of most participants). Shop stewards report that some isiXhosa speaking participants never spoke at all during the whole three-day course. (Coetzee, 2002: 18)

She also confirmed that problems with language related to the fact that course manuals were only available in English and Afrikaans, and added that:

One educator went so far as to say that, "judging from questions asked after the course, it was clear that most shop stewards did not understand the material" (Coetzee, 2002: 21).

In the FSST workshop, even the shop-steward roles that were being so expertly modelled were also deeply embedded in a language, culture and sense of humour that could serve to further marginalize isiXhosa-speaking workers, except for those fluent in the Western Cape, working-class dialect of Afrikaans.

⁸⁸ Only the FSST manual was available in Afrikaans.

All these factors serve to reproduce the unequal, broader, societal power relations based on language and literacy, and act to restrict the multi-voicedness of communication in union meetings: to limit those whose voices can be heard and who can contribute to the process of knowledge construction.

Concluding comments

The analysis of these workshops shows that union pedagogy is highly directive and deeply politically aligned. Drawing on Bernstein's concepts, I have described it as a complex 'mix' of performance pedagogy and visible forms of pedagogy on the one hand, and competence and invisible pedagogic forms on the other, with visible, performance pedagogy predominating, powerfully conscripting members into their trade unionist roles and a collective, class-based identity. The ideologically-directive nature of the pedagogic message serves to construct a collective, working class identity that critiques and challenges the status quo.

The union's critical stance towards the dominant social order is reflected in an espoused commitment to reciprocal relations between educators and learners and in the absence of significant differentiation or hierarchy amongst learners in terms of the nature of expected learning outcomes.

The union's counter-hegemonic orientation has implications for who can legitimately act as 'educator' within this context. The role of the union educator is a relatively specialised one, although the boundaries between education staff and other union staff are porous. My analysis has drawn on Situated Learning theory to describe the educator's role as that of a boundary worker who mediates between the union and a range of other communities of practice. However, crucial as the different forms of expertise are that derive from their membership of these communities of practice, this does not on its own construct the epistemological authority of educators. Educators' understanding of, and moral/political commitment to the union's principles and goals – their familiarity with and ability to articulate the union's regulative discourse – is as critical to the construction of their expertise as is their technical, legal or sociological understanding.

Drawing on Vygotskian and post-Vygostkian perspectives, I have argued that the ideologically directive character of trade union education is promoted by the use

of culturally-embedded tools of mediation. The communicative culture in union education programmes is oral (and visual) rather than text-based, despite the presence of large amounts of written text. The creative use of language, humour and performative use of the body construct a working class identity and help to conscript members to the union's values, principles and view of the world. These culturally-embedded mediational tools also play an important inclusionary role, provide a means for educators to 'reach' the experiences of the worker-participants, and act as a vehicle for worker-participants to give voice to their own experiences and concerns.

Knowledge in the non-formal education setting of the trade union is far from undifferentiated, as suggested by dualist distinctions between 'everyday' and 'scientific' knowledge. One of the most distinct features of knowledge in this context is its hybridity, which is facilitated by the dialectical movement between different forms of knowledge. These are woven together or layered to produce a hybrid form of knowledge which includes elements of both the abstract and the concrete, the 'local' and the general, and moves between the practical and the theoretical. Culturally-embedded tools of mediation in union education programmes and the use of code-switching and mode-switching in particular, may play an important role in facilitating movement between these different forms of knowledge, and between local experience and general principles.

The key goals of the union that forms my case study are to challenge power relations in the workplace, and in capitalist society more broadly, and its education programmes strongly reflect this transformative orientation. However, evidence from these education programmes suggests that union pedagogy also reproduces some of the dominant power relations. The prevalence of written text, the frequent absence of translation, and the culturally-embedded tools of mediation may function to marginalize or even exclude particular constituencies of people within the union's membership from processes of learning as well as from contributing to the collective 'knowledge pool' of the organisation.

As noted earlier, this thesis aimed to explore processes of learning, and forms of pedagogy and knowledge across different sites within the trade union. This was based on my understanding that pedagogy takes place not only in the union's organised education programmes but also in other sites within the organisation.

This assumption was strengthened by data from full-time shop-steward interviews regarding how they viewed the significance of organised trade union education programmes, relative to other sites of learning within the union. One full-time shop-steward argued that the systematic training of shop-stewards 'today' is crucial:

I think that as we've also become more professional, you can see that shop-stewards are asking more for training... they are insisting they want their formal training. I can understand that. (In the past) ... we weren't dealing with cases, you could thumb-suck things and you could manipulate the employer through those things... It's no longer like that. Trade unions need to deal with issues in a very legalistic way. And therefore I think formal training does become important. Shop-stewards need to know the LRA, they need to know some of the laws.... (FTSS Interview 1).

However, most of the full-time shop-stewards answered the question about the pedagogic value of the union's shop-steward training programmes at best ambiguously, and in some cases, dismissively:

We got basic shop-steward training.... What it consisted of I can't remember, you know. It was, like: What is the union? And then it tried to put the union into perspective, you know.... So it was giving us the background of that stuff you know. Grievances and disciplinaries, I think we had that as well. I did an advanced shop-steward training course with McGregor⁸⁹, but I can't say I got much out of it you know. I honestly can't say I got much out of it.... (FTSS Interview 3)

I can remember I was at this two-day (shop-steward training)... But you know what? I cannot really remember that we were taught anything. It was like: what is a shop-steward? Now, what's the role of the shop-steward? ... I knew those things were in there. But that training didn't assist me much. I think the best... the best school for me was The constituency that we served is more white-collar workers. So my learning ... my school was really when I got involved with blue-collar workers, getting interested in their cases... (FTSS Interview 1).

To be honest ... as much as I have gone through that ... foundation shop steward training, I felt I didn't need it. What I needed ... was ... the real physical involvement in ... dealing with issues The real training itself, to me, is your physical involvement (FTSS Interview 4).

⁸⁹ The publisher of a directory of South African company ownership.

These points are acknowledged by educator staff within the union. A routine report of the PEO to the union's Education and Training Committee notes of the FSST training that:

The only way that the shopstewards will really gain confidence and increase their capacity is through experience, through applying the skills they have learnt in the course, and through trial and error. Formal workshops are very limited in what they can achieve – they need to go hand-in-hand with capacity building on the job (SAMWU, 2002g: 2).

The next chapter will turn to those areas of the union's organisational life which these quotes suggest are fertile sites of learning within the union: the 'physical involvement' of organising, challenging management and defending fellow workers.

CHAPTER 5:

‘SCHOOLS OF LABOUR’⁹⁰: INFORMAL LEARNING THROUGH ORGANISATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Introduction

It was noted in Chapter 1 that historically within the South African labour movement, worker education was seen as taking place not only in seminars, workshops and planned education programmes, but in a variety of events such as meetings and rallies as well as through the day-to-day actions of workers. Soon after COSATU was formed, its education officer captured this in a speech to a union education conference:

Firstly, education cannot and must not be separated from organisation ... Secondly, education can take place anywhere, at any time and involves people of all ages... Any meeting, any strike, any wage negotiation, and any lunch break can be used as places where education takes place (Erwin, 1986, quoted in Baskin, 1991: 244).

Drawing on the Situated Learning theorists’ perspective of the union as a ‘community of practice’, my research aimed to explore the learning and pedagogic dimension of workers’ participation in the day-to-day organisational life of their union (meeting, organising and challenging management). My first step was to observe meetings taking place within this branch of the union. This was followed by six focus-group interviews with ordinary shop-stewards, as well as in-depth individual interviews with six full-time shop-stewards. The interviews with full-time shop-stewards provided me with particularly rich data of how – through their involvement in union organisation over time – these activists felt they had developed their understanding and skills. In addition to interview and observational data, the union’s archival interviews as well as other documentary sources threw light on these issues.

This chapter follows a similar structure to Chapter 4. It begins by providing an historical perspective of learning through organisational involvement, including a

⁹⁰ This term of Welton’s (1991) is explained in Chapter 1.

thematic account of how full-time shop-stewards initially became involved in the union. The remainder of the chapter will focus on the pedagogic role of union meetings specifically, starting with a descriptive overview of the eight meetings observed, and presenting two vignettes describing an Area Committee meeting and three depot-level meeting respectively. This is followed by an in-depth analysis of these eight meetings along the key lines of enquiry identified in Chapter 3: forms of pedagogy; educator and learner roles; symbolic tools of mediation; the relationship between different forms of knowledge; and the social purpose of union pedagogy.

Personal reflections of learning through organisational involvement

The personal reflections of current shop-stewards, as well as memories of past worker leaders demonstrate evidence of significant ‘learning through organisational involvement’.

As noted in Chapter 1, during the early years of the CTMWA, there was little organisational involvement on the part of the vast majority of ordinary union members. The Association’s Executive meetings were run on lines that mimicked the formalistic procedures adopted by the City Council, with all business conducted in English, great attention being paid to procedural detail, and very detailed minutes being recorded (Rudin, 1996). One worker who was to become a leading activist in the 1980s recalled:

... when I came in, you know, people (wore) ties and suits when they came to meetings, and you know, I’m not used to those things, attending meetings with a suit and a tie. I felt out of place... and even the language which they spoke was a very high English, it wasn’t a level which everybody could understand (Archival interview T).

It was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that the organisational culture of the union underwent significant changes. Salie Manie, who rose to prominence as a worker leader during this period, recalled the changes that occurred as the process of democratisation of the union began to get under way:

I made a conscious effort to speak in Afrikaans. And I encouraged people to identify people from the more blue-collar areas to get them to become

involved. And that was the time when things really started changing dramatically, the kind of language that we used, the kind of people that we got involved, and the participation from people at the shop-floor area (Archival interview S).

After the formation of SAMWU in 1987, when African and coloured municipal workers in Cape Town were brought together in one union for the first time, the language of 'Mr' began to give way to 'Comrade', and in shopsteward council meetings, members "started singing the anthem (of the liberation movement – LC), and the Amandla's, the Viva's (were) coming through...." (Archival interview R).

To what extent did current worker leaders in the union consciously experience the process of getting involved in the union as a 'learning experiences', and if they did, how do they view such learning as having taking place? This question was posed to six full-time shop-stewards in my interviews with them, and what follows is a broad thematic overview of their responses.

Experience, action, learning and organisational involvement

My question to full-time shop-stewards of how they had initially got involved in the union almost invariably elicited long, personal narratives. One shop-steward worked as a petrol attendant in a garage; when he realised that workers were not getting paid overtime for public holidays, he decided to challenge this by approaching an official of the Industrial Council and forcing him to put pressure on the garage manager to meet the legal wage requirements. He claimed that his success in this individual action "gave me a very, very, very powerful militant thinking in my heart...." and he determined to help fellow-workers learn their rights. His new-found confidence led him to approach the union organising garage workers. That in turn led him to take a stronger stand:

Afterwards then I ...decided ... no, I have to stand very strong and challenge this manager now. I started from then, challenging him for everything, hours of work, the rotation of our shifts ... (FTSS Interview 5).

Thus his learning originated prior to his involvement with the union in his experiences of injustice in the workplace. As he became involved in the union, so he increasingly felt the need to inform himself better, and he started to go to libraries to seek out information around labour law, and the history of the labour

movement. The dialectical relationship between his taking an individual stand, the growth in his self-confidence, his growing organisational involvement and the desire for self-study is clear in his narrative.

I explored how he saw the relationship between what he learnt 'from his own experience', and what he learnt through his organisational involvement. The knowledge that things were wrong 'came from his own experience':

I did never need to guess in order for me to know that now this is really something wrong – that I need to fight... it came up – I would say – instantly.

But 'the actual way of struggling against that' was passed on to him from other members of the organisation in which he was becoming involved:

But now the technical ways of fighting it ... you gain experience ... through... other comrades (FTSS Interview 5).

Another shop-steward also answered my question about his initial involvement in the union with a long narrative. He had started working for the City Council in 1977 in "an extremely oppressive depot". He was aware that there was a CTMWA shop-steward in this depot but "this guy was scared of management", so he decided to take up the grievances of his fellow-workers more vigorously. One day he decided to confront the manager, and entered the manager's office carrying a copy of the union's training manual, with its red cover and union logo. The manager was "rude and aggressive"; after the shop-steward had been forced to stand waiting on his feet for some time, the manager demanded to know what he wanted.

(He was) like, very rude. And I said I've got some grievances that the workers have given me to address. He said: "Sit down", and I sat down. I was petrified, you know, at the time ... because I hadn't undergone any training... And I when I put the file down on the desk, and I looked up at him, his lip was quivering away. Then I thought: here am I all scared, and look at this guy, I mean, he's really ... crapping himself! He couldn't take his eyes off the red file ... and I opened it you know! I just had that ... tool in my hand, you know... and I thought: look at this guy, he's scared out of his wits! This union must be strong, you know. And of course it was little things like that that gave me the strength to challenge them... So I literally brought the union into the workplace for the first time ... (FTSS Interview 3).

‘Armed’ with the symbolic power of the union (in the form of his red training manual), this shop-steward took an individual stand on matters which he knew ‘were wrong’, and the self-confidence he gained from the success of this action led to greater organisational involvement.

Legitimate peripheral participation and mentoring

Once within the union organisation, a number of these shop-steward interviewees felt that they learnt ‘through being present and observing’ rather than being centrally involved – a classical example of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

One shop-steward recalled:

... now John Ernstzen (the first General Secretary of SAMWU – LC) never taught me ... but I used to watch him very closely, you know... His style, and the manner in which he speaks, and the manner in which he treats people, and all of those things. And .. so ya, you know, I used to watch him very closely, but I can’t say that...

Interviewer: There wasn’t anyone who consciously mentored you?

No ... not consciously.... (FTSS Interview 3).

Another recalled a union organiser as playing a more conscious mentoring role in his development as a new shop-steward, particularly in acquiring the correct dispositions, discourses and behaviours of ‘the good shop-steward’. In negotiations with management, the organiser taught him never to say: ‘the members are saying this’ but rather that ‘we, as the union, feel that this and that be done’. He also described how his mentor taught him not to become too emotional in negotiations, and that “you don’t just jump and speak because sometimes you’ll speak ... the right thing but in the wrong way....” (FTSS Interview 5).

‘Being thrown in at the deep end’

In addition to supportive forms of mentoring however, some shop-stewards felt that they learnt by being simply ‘thrown in at the deep end’ (sometimes deliberately) and learning through trial and error. One FTSS recalled in her interview how one of the more experienced shop-stewards used to take her and another woman shop-steward along with him to meetings:

And X was one of my mentors. What (he) used to do was... he used to take us along to meetings. We don't know a thing about the issue that we're going to discuss! Then he would open the meeting, he would then put SAMWU's position there, and then X would excuse himself (leave the meeting – LC). And we were sitting there, like, we're supposed to speak now! What are we supposed to say? And we were forced in that way ... and to me, that was the biggest school. I mean... you were forced to do it, you see, you were left completely on your own... ja, that was the way that I learnt. Not through the formal... through the training workshops (FTSS Interview 1).

Self-study

The importance of self-study was also emphasised on many occasions by these shop-stewards. One full-time shop-steward who was the union's regional coordinator of Education and Training argued that "My training predominantly came through workshops, being pushed into meetings, and then being forced to read". She emphasised:

The area of workplace education and training is very difficult... you've got to sit down, you've got to read, you've got to follow through, you've got to understand what you're doing (FTSS Interview 6).

Another argued:

There are the two educations: the one being that in which you are taught, and the other one being that you actually teach yourself through reading your documentation, reading the newspapers, watching television, reading history ... things like that you know, so it's extremely important that it's not only the one (where) you are taught but the one where you teach yourself (FTSS Interview 3).

Participation in meetings

One full-time shop-steward who had been involved in the union's Women's Forum⁹¹ emphasised the valuable learning that resulted from participation in meetings of such structures.

We really learnt a lot there. And we did a lot of things... Oh but there were tears, hey! There were tears... You are sitting as the Chair of the Women's Forum, and you get to listen to all the women's problems – at home, in the workplace, sacrifices, beatings... The women in the Women's Forum developed to the extent that they could open up their mouths and challenge

⁹¹. This was a non-constitutional structure of the union, and was open to all women union members (not only women shop-stewards).

the men.... For me, in terms of not getting formal training within the union, a lot of my training I got through the Forum. And my learning I got through there We used to work over the weekend, some brought their children ... That was where I learnt the most. ... Taught us how to write reports, how to present, those basic skills. And how to read Then we started moving the Provincial meetings from out of Cape Town to the other rural areas – a lot of learning I got from the rural women.... (FTSS Interview 6).

These interviews suggest that newcomers to the union community of practice learn experientially in a variety of ways: through experiencing a ‘gut sense’ that something is wrong or unjust, through taking an individual stand on an issue and gaining confidence from this action, through participation in union activities, through observation of, and mentoring by, old-timers in the union, and by simply being ‘thrown in at the deep end’. Experience of injustice, and growing involvement in the union, acted as a stimulus for self study.

‘Meetings’ presented one, well-defined site where processes of learning and pedagogy could be observed in more depth, and it is on the pedagogic role of meetings specifically that the remainder of this chapter will focus.

Observations of pedagogy in process in union meetings

As noted in Chapter 3, meetings at different levels of the union – from depot-level, to area council, to branch, provincial and national level – are key sites of involvement for union members (see Appendix 1 for a diagram of branch structures of the union). Union campaigns are another significant area of involvement, and the union collaborates with other civil society and social movement organisations in some of these campaigns. For example, the Cape Town branch of SAMWU sends representatives to meetings of forums such as the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) and Anti-Eviction Campaign (AEC).

This section briefly reviews eight union meetings⁹² and presents vignettes giving a ‘thick description’ of four of these meetings: one Area Council meeting and the three Depot-level meetings. These vignettes describe selected incidents in these meetings and were constructed to provide data to underpin the key issues that I will subsequently take up in my analysis.

⁹² See Appendix 3 for a full list of the dates and locations of these meetings.

1. Branch-level meetings

I observed three Area Council meetings of the Tygerberg, Cape Town Metro (CTM) and South Peninsula Municipality (SPM) areas, one Branch Executive Meeting (BEC) and a two-day meeting of the Provincial Educators' Forum. The latter reviewed the progress of shop-steward training and focused on workplace training, including a range of issues related to the new skills legislation

The Area Council meetings and the BEC all covered a similar agenda, although the sequencing and foregrounding of issues varied in different meetings. The agenda in most cases consisted of a report from the national Bargaining Council (SALGBC) covering the restructuring of posts in local government, employment equity, skills development and conditions of service; 'organisational rights' issues, including the imminent cut in the number of full time shop-stewards allowed this branch⁹³; the introduction of a new, municipal police force; reports on health and safety, and workplace education and training; and the possibility of an impending national strike by the union. The meetings also made reference to a number of organisational and political processes outside of the union in which some union activists were involved, including the APF, the AEC and the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC)⁹⁴. A large number of documents – all in English – was distributed to participants at the beginning of each meeting.

What follows is a 'thick description' of the South Peninsula Area Committee meeting.

Vignette 1: South Peninsula Shop-steward Area Council meeting (hereafter, the SPM meeting)

This meeting takes place in a hall in a municipal caravan park. The meeting is jointly chaired by an elderly woman shop-steward, and the full-time shop-steward for this area, and there is larger representation by women shop-stewards than other meetings I have observed. There is a large number of papers and documents

⁹³ A new national agreement provided for a cut in the number of FTSS in some metropolitan areas, while improving the organisational rights of municipal workers in smaller towns and rural districts.

⁹⁴ An advocacy-cum-campaign organization which has fought for free treatment for people who are HIV positive.

laid out in neat piles at the entrance to the hall, and participants sit and read while they wait for the meeting to start.

The meeting begins with the singing of the national anthem⁹⁵, a 'roll call', confirmation of previous meetings' minutes and negotiation of the agenda. The FTSS gives a report on restructuring of local government. He does not assume familiarity with the issue but explicitly recaps, giving background context and detail. He draws links between a wide range of issues: restructuring, corporatisation and privatisation, equity issues, questions of service delivery, and retrenchments. He introduces the union's plans to conduct a research project on how to "turn service delivery around" on workers' terms, and explains that this research project is linked to ongoing research by a number of union-linked outside research groups.

The FTSS's input is interwoven with exchanges between shop-stewards sharing their different experiences around privatisation, and a heated and lengthy debate ensues on how best to counter privatisation and on the preparedness of union members to embark on mass action. Throughout this debate (presented in some detail below), the FTSS sums up positions, pushes debate further, and finally draws together contending positions into a coherent proposal.

Ss1: Management is pushing with this privatisation – because they have this objective: at the end of office, they will buy into the private companies. We can't just sit here – we need to take this thing to the streets – some are ducking and diving... We learnt in the past we'd rather suffer for a few days than for a few years

Ss2: What is the union doing? What is the leadership doing? SAMWU is affiliated to COSATU – linked to the ANC – how can they do this? It's a huge concern for us in our depot.

*Ss3: ...We have to find a way to stop them – we have to get into communities.
[Yes...]*

⁹⁵ Union members never sing the second half of the 'official' version, which consists of the apartheid-era national anthem, 'Die Stem'.

Ss4: ... To say "Let us take this out to the streets" – we shop-stewards are in danger of being there on our own – they don't want to support us there. The workers are not willing to go to the streets even for wages. We need to go back to workers and find out whether they're willing. Otherwise we the leadership will be in danger. Then we'll find at the end of the day, no-one wants....

FTSS: Matthew put this into perspective. War talk is cheap. But there is a lot of frustration on the ground. There are two things we need to decide: how to get a mandate from our members? What do we take to the BEC? We need to guide the union.

Ss3: The weapons we have to use have changed. [...Yes...] We have new legislation – we need to use it – use the new laws. The (picketing) action we took on the streets is informational – we need to rely on the law – old tactics are no longer effective.

Ss1: I want to disagree... we need to understand: it's not a matter of wages, it's a matter of life and death! We need to go out into the streets ... We need to make clear to members ... this new legislation is bringing about privatisation. This is a matter of life and death! It is our children and grandchildren who will suffer if we privatise... where does cholera come from⁹⁶? (He speaks passionately, raising his tone and volume).

Ss5: What must workers do ...when there's no mechanism...?

FTSS: We've got three positions at this particular moment:

- 1. There's no way we can take action like a wild cat strike – we have to have a protected strike via the law; therefore, it's a question of how can we use the law;*
- 2. Workers can't eat or drink legislation; they face a clear attack – not only from the employer; also from the central government⁹⁷; not only the DA⁹⁸ in the*

⁹⁶ This is a reference to an earlier point, where the FTSS explained how water cut-offs in Natal were thought to be linked to recent cholera outbreaks in the area.

⁹⁷ This is a reference to expenditure cuts from National Government to Local Government.

⁹⁸ Democratic Alliance – a right-wing coalition between the DP (Democratic Party) and NNP (New National Party) holding power in the Provincial Government at that time.

Western Cape but also elsewhere; workers need food on the table and jobs. It's almost a panic situation.

3. *We as workers cannot do this alone – how can we join up with communities? We mustn't just trash our union. How are we going to take it forward ... to the BEC...? Wie wil praat (who wants to talk)? I am allowing discussion ... this is very important. AJ, Lapedi, Mary, Jean, Faried...?*

Chairperson: Yes – we need to use legislation. We need to educate ourselves – we spoke about getting together on Saturday mornings to look at, for example, the Systems Act. But what is the unions' power base? It is the membership. Everyone standing together. We've got to use our power base! You also have to bring the community along with you. We can send pamphlets through the electricity meter readers. What are we doing to counteract pamphlets of the employers? We have to tell communities they'll suffer more! The rich is getting richer, and the poor is getting poorer. We must say it in simple English so that people can understand. We must also educate our members. Maybe it will stir up ourselves and our members – maybe to get a strike going. If we go on strike now and the community's not with us... But now, they will say "... viva Council workers!..."

FTSS: Let me summarise again. We had three points – now they've all converged:- We need to utilise legislation; we need those workshops once or twice a month, to familiarise ourselves; We need to mobilise our members; as Gary said, we can't leave it up to legislation; Struggle is the life blood of the workers. This is a power play. Workers are asking: Wat maak SAMWU? Waar is SAMWU? (What is SAMWU doing? Where is SAMWU?) We need to know: are our members behind us? Are we building towards a strike? Or do we just have Gary's ideology? Will our members support our union – if it be for a day, a week, a month? We need to get community support. Now where are the pamphlets? And how many of you have joined community organisations? Wat behoort jy aan? (Which do you belong to?) Yes, we have APF in the union where the community is on board, but what are we doing on the ground? ... As Mary says: the union belongs to us – we have to get our information from ourselves. We can't say: "The union's failing us" – we're actually failing ourselves.

Ss1: I agree. But when we speak about legislation it's just another theory. It's not an issue of how we use it (the law) – rather how do we challenge it?

Ss6: We should touch with civics⁹⁹ who are taking council to court. They're getting massive publicity – we should work with them.

Ss7: We're not here to score political points for the ANC or DP. This is about an attack on the working class – we must take up workers' issues

2: Depot-level meetings

This series of meetings arose out of a research project on workplace restructuring in the branch, and was a deliberate attempt to tap workers' knowledge of changes in work organisation in municipal depots. It took place against the background of major local government restructuring and repeated attempts on the part of management to outsource and privatise services on the one hand, and significant new pressures to enhance basic service delivery to poor and previously disadvantaged areas of the city on the other. The branch's BEC decided to embark on a research process which would identify – from workers' point of view – how the 'efficiency and effectiveness' of service delivery might be improved, while at the same time protecting jobs and public ownership of these services.

The process began with a Branch workshop in May 2001, involving shop-stewards from the water, solid waste and electricity sectors of the municipality, and facilitated by the labour service organisation, the International Labour Resource and Information Group (ILRIG) (SAMWU, 2001a). As a follow-up to this workshop, the branch decided that each full-time shop-steward should hold meetings with workers in the municipal depots under their responsibility to find out how 'workers on the ground' perceived that service delivery could be improved. I followed one full-time shop-steward into the field, observing three, early morning meetings with different 'gangs' of workers at a Waterworks depot in southern Cape Town.

⁹⁹ Residentially-based, community organisations.

Vignette 2: Meetings at a Waterworks Depot

The first meeting is with a 'gang' of 17 construction workers who are almost all isiXhosa-speaking. We meet in the workers' 'mess room', at one end of the depot. There is a long delay as we wait for a translator to arrive, and in the course of this wait, I discover that all the workers in this gang are from the same rural town in the Eastern Cape, some having worked for the Council¹⁰⁰ for almost 30 years. They defer to one of the older workers named 'Headman', who apparently is actually a headman in their rural, home area. The workers complain about an isiXhosa-speaking administrative clerk who is unwilling to come down to the 'workers' section of the depot to translate for them. They describe her as "Xhosa outside, and umlungu (white) inside".

The full-time shop-steward starts the meeting with a formal role-call, and then an introduction to the research:

For years now SAMWU has been fighting against privatisation. Management has continued with privatisation. They're saying: the systems are bad, people can't deliver, workers are basically useless. The private sector is more efficient and effective than Council workers. As the union we are trying to find out: is this really true? Or are there bad practices? The question is: what is the problem? What works well? What doesn't work well?

Workers detail problems of private contractors who underpay their employees, and hence the quality of work is poor. They express a strong desire to 'serve the community': "We don't have any problem with standby (overtime), because we know we are helping the community....", and they distinguish sharply between this role, and 'filling the pockets' of management.

As the meeting closes, the full-time shop-steward tells me that a member of this 'gang' who had been silent throughout the meeting had been in conflict with other isiXhosa-speaking workers, because he is "one of the city guys" with a relatively high level of formal education, and "he resents being an ordinary 'boy' under Headman".

¹⁰⁰ Previously, as migrant workers, they worked for one of the Black Local Authorities.

Our next meeting is with the 'meter readers' and this time, we meet in the boardroom of the 'White House' – the administrative centre of the depot. Of the 14 men, only one is isiXhosa-speaking, and the rest Afrikaans-speaking. They are on average much younger than the construction workers, and I learn that they are required to have a Std 8 (Grade 10) to become a meter reader. The meeting is conducted in Afrikaans, and the atmosphere is lively and jovial. The depot shop-steward introduces the meeting by explaining that management is:

coming up with a plan for privatisation. We at SAMWU want to come up with a plan – we have the people, we can do the job. They say we climb in the trees – we are a bunch of lazy people. We can show them that it's not true... We want to ask a few questions. Don't be afraid to speak. Some of you are IMATU – our plan must include you.

Like the first meeting, what emerges is a wide set of grievances, including problems of gangs disrupting their work in gangster-controlled townships, inadequate training and their feelings of being overworked and unrecognised:

... we still go to those areas even though there is the gangs... We are efficient; we are going extra and even more extra... Sometimes we work till 5 o'clock... sometimes into the evenings... If things carry on, we'll get sick from stress. It's still like the apartheid time when everyone worked like slaves....

The third meeting is with a group of about 15 'meter cover lifters', again in the workers' mess-room. Most of the meeting takes place in Afrikaans. The full-time shop-steward explains the purpose of the research – again, in a deliberately provocative and theatrical way. In the ensuing discussion, workers raise problems of lack of materials, broken machinery, and lack of training. They are extremely critical of privatisation:

If a private company laid a main (pipe), you would have such a mess! It would burst – then the council must put it right. Private is not cheap... they just throw some stones and then the drain gets blocked! Its not cheap.

At one point, one worker stands up and delivers a long speech – or rather a performance – that is deeply emotional, and verbally and physically dramatic:

Who has skills? These guys (he points to fellow workers)... I've been here 22 years, and I get labourer's money. Your body gets tired. The worker's one arm gets fucked (he illustrates graphically).

He claims indignantly that some workers have only worked here five years, but already earn more than he. He feels embarrassed in front of his own children who have finished school and gone on to study at a local technikon.:

They say: my pa earns such a little money.... No! this council, this management, must (go).

Analysis of pedagogy in union meetings

Meetings represent sites within the union where learning “is not reified as an extraneous goal” (Wenger, 1998: 76). The primary purpose of union meetings is to take collective decisions, rather than to carry out education. When meetings are used for educational purposes, the educative process is bracketed as a discrete section of the meeting (as occurred in the Tygerberg meeting).

Nevertheless, union meetings do perform educational functions in at least two ways – directly and indirectly. Firstly, meetings play a critical role in facilitating information-sharing between workers, developing common perspectives, and strategising around common problems – the necessary pre-requisites for taking decisions. Secondly, there is an explicit awareness that leadership ‘capacity’ has to be widely shared because worker leaders are constantly being siphoned off into positions of greater responsibility within the union or, increasingly over the past few years, into management or government. Meetings play an important role in producing and reproducing this ‘capacity’.

How exactly are these educational functions of meetings achieved? And who plays the key pedagogic roles in union meetings?

Forms of pedagogy in union meetings

Learning through participation

Earlier in this chapter, an identification of key themes emerging from interviews with full-time shop-stewards showed that the experience of taking action played a

role in learning in two ways. Firstly the self-confidence from taking individual action acted as a catalyst for becoming organisationally involved. Secondly once within the organisation, shop-stewards that their most valuable learning came through participation in the trade union, either through the observation of 'old-timers' or by being 'thrown in at the deep end'.

This 'participation in a community of practice' is the primary way in which learning takes place in union meetings. In some of these meetings, participation by most of those attending was peripheral: many participants did not actively contribute to the debates, but they listened attentively and were involved in a less visible way. Some of these meetings (the SPM and Tygerberg meetings as well as the Depot-level meetings) enjoyed much wider participation than others (the CTM and BEC), particularly when shop-stewards delivered reports and discussions about 'conditions on the ground'. Active participation was sometime sought or demanded by the chairperson or facilitator, as evidenced in the SPM meeting.

Unlike workshops where shop-steward roles and identities are explicitly 'taught', in meetings roles and identities are acquired largely unconsciously through workers' participation in this community of practice. Whether participation is 'peripheral' or 'central', workers and shop-stewards are apprenticed to their roles and acquire the principles and practices of democracy and workers' control – the 'accumulated knowledge of prior generations' of workers (Cole and Engeström, 1993: 9) that is now sedimented in the functioning of the union as an organisation.

Peer mentoring

While much learning happens through observation and participation, there are also forms of pedagogy – more specifically, forms of mentoring or 'guided participation' – going on in union meetings.

In the in-depth interviews cited earlier in this chapter, a number of full-time shop-stewards referred to those who had acted as their mentors, deliberately or unconsciously, and who had played an important role in their development. The role played by mentors was also mentioned in two of the focus group interviews:

Most shop-stewards come from a revolutionary background. Most have learnt through attending meetings. Some are now in Parliament, like Salie Manie. I learnt from his ideas. Every meeting is learning.... (FGI 3)

I as a shop-steward – I was one who didn't go for formal training for a long time. But the minute I was elected I was told: alright, you're going to learn on the job. And I was taught by the cleaner – the shop-steward ... I had to do cases, and he was there with me. He had to give me information and I would wonder: how does he know what I want? But he used to come with exactly what I wanted. Every time I picked up the phone ... he'd come with exactly what I wanted (FGI 1).

In terms of Bernstein's (1996) categories, interventions by peer mentors include both visible (explicitly directive) and less visible (apparently non-directive, facilitative) forms of pedagogy. Examples of when mentoring took the form of visible pedagogy, where the 'rules' of this community of practice were explicitly and forcibly transmitted, included the CTM meeting where a worker delegate was told to speak louder: "Speak like a shop-steward!" and the Tygerberg meeting, where an organiser warned shop-stewards:

You must be careful in your area. The Council will call meetings – they'll say they've consulted with the public. You must attend these meetings – you must raise questions about costs... we will work out questions for you to ask. Go into those meetings and protect our position.

In the third Depot-level meeting, the full-time shop-steward urged workers to *think* as if they were in control: "If we take this depot and give it to you and say: put it right! Where would you begin?" Although directive, these pedagogic interventions were not intended to usurp workers' agency but exhorted them to exercise their agency and to imagine alternatives.

Mentoring also took the form of less visible forms of pedagogy (where learning outcomes were not communicated directly) when some participants helped their comrades to recontextualise their 'local' experiences within a broader context, thus enabling them to gain a better understanding of how different elements of their experience might be connected to one another. For example, in the long debate in the SPM meeting, the full-time shop-steward made a number of contextualising moves: he helped participants to define the problem, he guided participants to interrogate and analyse their experiences, he posed real questions to which none of them yet had the answer, and he facilitated a movement towards greater depth of understanding and more generalised conclusions. His facilitative role drew on shop-stewards' experiences in a form resembling the classical 'learning cycle' of the Experiential Learning theorists (Kolb, 1984).

Often in meetings the process of recontextualising workers' experiences did not seem to be a conscious one. But equally often, those who sketched wider and wider layers of context were fully aware of their contextualising role and the importance of helping others to 'grasp the full picture'. For example, the full-time shop-steward in the SPM meeting continually stressed "the need to put it into perspective", while in the PEF, the Chairperson emphasised the importance of drawing inter-connections between workplace restructuring and workplace education and training issues, and asked: "How in SAMWU do we make workers understand and see the linkages?"

Communication in most of the meetings observed was more multi-voiced than in the union education programmes, although this does not mean that meetings were any less ideologically directive than workshops. However, in contrast with union education programmes where the union's political principles and worldview were largely communicated from union educators *to* workers, meetings provided a greater space for multiple and contested meanings, and for workers to give voice to their own values and worldview. For example, on being given the opportunity to talk about the problems they face, the responses of workers in the Depot-level meetings demonstrated their desire for a safe, healthy, and non-exploitative work environment, to be treated with respect and dignity, for their contributions to be acknowledged ("We are efficient, extra efficient. We are doing our job but no-one sees it") including their contributions to workplace knowledge, and for opportunities to develop and progress in their jobs. Their responses also illustrate the importance they place in having pride in the work they do and their sense of responsibility to provide an acceptable level of services particularly to poorer communities. By providing a space for these 'worker voices' to be heard, these meetings serve to cement workers' values into the 'rules' of the union as a community of practice and thus allow them to contribute to the regulative discourse that expresses itself so powerfully in union pedagogy.

Division of labour: A 'widely dispersed' educator role

Union meetings might have a set agenda, but they are places where solutions are sought to real problems facing workers, and questions are posed to which no-one has the answer. Nobody is seen as having a monopoly on the information and

knowledge which is required to answer these questions or solve these problems, as illustrated in the organiser's input to the Tygerberg meeting (in relation to the issue of municipal policing):

Comrades, we don't have all the answers for you, as much as you are in the dark, we are in the dark.... There are no clear answers, and different answers are being given in different places....

Cole and Engeström (1993: 31) refer to the 'distributed' nature of 'cognition' characteristic of activity systems, where 'thought' must be viewed as a collective, co-operative activity. This perspective goes some way to capturing the processes of collective 'pooling' of experiences and information in union meetings. Whereas in union workshops, the role of the educator is clearly identified (although it is flexible and a range of union staff or worker leaders may step into this role), in meetings, the role of educator is far more widely distributed – virtually anyone can step into this role at any time – and the boundary between educator and learner is continually shifting. For example, in the Depot-level meetings two shop-stewards facilitated the processes of information gathering, but ordinary workers also stepped temporarily into pedagogic roles, drawing on their experience and historical memory to share knowledge with fellow workers.

The processes of recontextualisation referred to above frequently involved the full range of shop-stewards and workers in dialogue, in a process of mutual mentoring and learning. For example, shop-stewards in the CTM meeting worked to make sense of a colleague's question by establishing conceptual connections, and drawing out their implications:

Ss1: What is the link between privatisation and (the) Health, Safety and Environment (committee of the union)?

Ss2 (Health and Safety representative): They are using every excuse to get rid of our people, so where a shop-steward has an injury, suddenly documents disappear, next thing he's retrenched

Chairperson: Members who've been injured on duty are first to lose their jobs with privatisation.

There are, however, some shop-stewards and workers who come significantly to the fore as 'recontextualising agents' as a result of their role as boundary workers. For example, the full-time shop-steward who facilitated the Depot-level

workshops had an unusually rich set of involvements in multiple forums outside of his immediate union branch structure. He was an experienced artisan-plumber who had acted as a branch representative within higher (provincial and national) structures of the union, a union representative on a national, tri-partite policy body engaged in developing new water policy for South Africa, and had attended local and international conferences where he had met environmental activists from around the world and engaged in international advocacy around water issues. He had attended a (non-certificated) course in adult education at a local university and had also been involved in numerous community forums, including developing a Water Activists' Course for the training of 'reconnection brigades',¹⁰¹ drawn from community activists in local townships¹⁰².

Every community of practice is 'cross-fertilised' when its members who hold membership in multiple communities of practice import elements of practice from one community to another (Wenger, 1998: 105). In many cases, this happens incidentally, but in the case of the union, the organisation consciously and strategically places representatives in other communities of practice, and their presence there has a deliberate 'knowledge' function: to bring contextual information back into the union. Boundary workers not only bring vital information back into the union but also act as educators in other communities of practice, influencing and shaping understandings and activities within these sites. For example, in the SPM meeting, the Chairperson emphasised the importance of 'educating the community' in order to 'counteract the pamphlets of the employers'. The pedagogic role (in addition to information-gathering role) of boundary workers also emerged in some of the FTSS interviews. One pointed out in reference to his own involvement in the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF):

Yes, we always represent the union. Workshops we have with them is on behalf of the union because that's part of our mandate, to educate.... So where we get requests to assist them to know their rights, we will ... play an educational role, and it's also a way of lobbying support, fostering support, to have a joint approach in the APF (Interview 1).

¹⁰¹ These community activists aimed to defy the local council by reconnecting the water supplies of residents who had been cut-off as a result of non-payment of water tariffs.

¹⁰² Information gathered at meeting with this shop-steward on 18/10/01.

In summary then, in union meetings epistemological authority is widely distributed, educator and learner roles are interchangeable, and a wide range of ordinary workers and shop-stewards play key mediating roles. Participation in the organisation (action) as well as the physical and symbolic environment of the organisation itself act as tools of mediation. In addition, there is also significant use of other symbolic tools of mediation in meetings.

Symbolic tools of mediation

Oral communication clearly dominates union meetings, despite the presence of large amounts of written text. Some of the reports delivered in constitutional meetings (for example, those in the BEC) took the form of long, dense monologues. But in report-backs delivered by shop-stewards, in debates amongst participants, and in the dialogues between workers in the Depot-level meetings, communication was characterised by lively anecdotes, creative use of language suffused with emotion and humour, and strong body language (gesticulating, pointing, slamming the fist into the hand for emphasis).

Language, humour and emotion

Many of the elements that make up the distinctive speech genre in workshops were also present in meetings. For example, code-switching was prevalent in meetings even when there was full translation (for example, in the Tygerberg meeting and the Depot-level meetings). In the BEC and CTM meetings there was no translation, but in the case of the latter, the chairperson frequently switched to Afrikaans when being humorous or when chastising delegates for not having read documents or attended meetings. However, the speech-genre of meetings was considerably richer and more elaborated than that of workshops observed.

Meetings were frequently marked by the use of repetitious language, sometimes in an almost evangelical tone. For example, in the second Depot-level Workshop, the facilitator summed up what participants had said by emphasising points in a way intended to mobilise emotions for the purposes of constructing values, and reinforcing workers' combative, unionist identity:

So we are saying that we need to re-organise the method of service delivery; we are saying that we are short staffed; we are saying that there is 'dead

wood'¹⁰³; we are saying that we don't have protective clothing or proper tools; we are saying that there is no proper training: computer training, driver training, customer care, ABET; we are saying that we are being bullied, we are being forced out of our offices down to the bottom – from the White House to the dog's kennel...!

Just as personal narrative played an important role in structuring the full-time shop-stewards responses in my interviews with them, so story-telling was an integral part of information-sharing and comparing of experiences in meetings, and its clear mediating role was illustrated on numerous occasions when control over these 'stories' was exerted by the chair to stop shop-stewards from relating experiences which did not seem relevant to the item under discussion. In these meetings, shop-stewards not only learnt *from* stories, but also learnt *how* and *when* to tell stories – clearly an important part of the skills repertoire of worker representatives. This practice of storytelling not only has a localising function (elaborating personal meaning) but is also intended to make a general point or lesson. For example, in the second Depot-level meeting, workers responded to the full-time shop-steward's request for them to outline their problems by relating long, richly-detailed stories of 'things gone wrong'. Far from being simply anecdotal, their stories were intended to illustrate broad points such as the incompetence of management or the principle that municipal workers should be accountable to the communities they serve, and the narrative at times *substituted* for 'the naming of the concept'¹⁰⁴.

Meetings were often lively and boisterous and had a distinctively 'carnavalesque' quality to them. One way in which this was visible was in the frequent use of ventriloquism (Wertsch, 1991: 59) in order to parody management. For example in the depot-level workshops, each time the shop-stewards introduced the research project to workers, they were deliberately provocative and theatrical in speaking through the voice of management:

... people say: privatisation is better; that the men here are a bunch of lazy... they just eat... they are inefficient and ineffective. That you just get nice clothes, a pension and medical aid, but you don't work. The private

¹⁰³ This is a reference to an assertion that some 'white collar' workers are unproductive and undeserving of their jobs.

¹⁰⁴ Mink (1987: 85) argues that narrative can play a cognitive function, and can even act as a 'rival' to analytical forms in terms of theoretical explanation.

sector is casuals – they work well, they don't get medical aid and pension. It's 'shape up or ship out'... It's hire or fire ... (Depot-level workshop 3).

The use of ventriloquism was echoed in some of the workers' responses, for example: "They (management) treat us like dogs: take your bone and go and lie down...!"

According to Bakhtin (1965/1994), 'folk humour' plays a key role in constructing the festive ambivalence of carnival. He views the tradition of folk humour as "a complex system of meaning existing alongside and in opposition to the 'authoritarian world' of dominant orthodoxy" (Bakhtin, 1965/1994: 194). Its key feature is that it is both deeply ambivalent – parodying the 'other' whilst also being critically self-reflexive – and it functions both to 'combat fear' and to celebrate "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and established order" (Bakhtin, 1965/1994: 198-9).

Humour, and the use of humorous metaphor, was all-pervasive in these meetings. As seen in many of the above extracts, humour was closely intermeshed with language constructions such as code-switching, ventriloquism and abusive language, strengthening their function of parodying management, 'the boere',¹⁰⁵ and others in positions of power. Sardonic humour was often embedded in the dextrous use of language; for example, in one of the Depot-level workshops, the full-time shop-steward argued: "Consultants are people that you give a watch to and then ask them what the time is." Waves of humorous comments often 'rippled' through meetings and alongside other rituals, was a means through which shop-stewards celebrated their collective identity. The humour used had a subversive character and contained implicit challenges to 'official authority' and 'established order' (Bakhtin, 1965) not only in the workplace, but also sometimes within the union itself. There was frequent use of exaggeration as well as a sardonic form of self-mockery that both acknowledged as well as challenged the socially hegemonic constructions of workers' identities. This was clearly evident on the occasions where sardonic humour was used to explain the purpose of the research to workers in the Depot workshops:

¹⁰⁵ Literally meaning: 'the farmers', but a term historically used by black South Africans to refer disparagingly to Afrikaners or whites.

They say we climb in the trees – we are a bunch of lazy people.

They're saying ... workers are basically useless. That you just get nice clothes, a pension and medical aid, but you don't work.

Debates and discussions in these meetings were often highly emotional and accompanied by strong body language. 'Emotion' may be viewed as an important tool for mediating learning in this context. This was most clearly illustrated in the Depot-level meetings when one worker delivered a long, emotional, speech performance condemning the ways in which his lack of access to training had blocked his progress in life, and had led to his feeling embarrassed in front of his children. The SPM meeting's debate around privatisation was embedded in calls to "take to the streets", "We must do something drastic", "They're trying to destroy the union", and "this is a matter of life and death!" In the BEC meeting, one shop-steward heatedly rejected the reduction in the number of full-time shop-stewards as an attack on workers' rights: "Rights accrued through actions! Beatings!" and rights which "people had died for". It was abundantly clear that participation in the union is not simply a responsibility or task but an act of 'passion' and commitment. This point was confirmed and elaborated in one of the interviews with a full-time shop-steward:

Now, you can have as much training... you can do as much work as you want to do. But the one area is: if you cannot recognise the imbalances within society, between people coming from different socio-economic backgrounds, you will never be able to become a shop-steward. That's my opinion. And if you do not have a passion, you will also not be able to become a good shop-steward (FTSS Interview 1).

One shop-steward in the Tygerberg meeting argued that the commitment and 'passion' of union activists has waned over time:

If we can get members passionate again it will be a miracle. Workers are not passionate any more about their jobs. Shop-stewards are not passionate about duties. Things have changed since 1994. We need to bring passion back into the union – we have to be enthusiastic! In Bellville passion is dead – I know! [laughter...].

When I asked one shop-steward in his individual interview whether he agreed with this assessment, he responded that the group of worker leaders with whom he worked closely are "a bunch of good, fine people that's passionate about what

they're doing", but that it was the broader political context (again described in the *emotional* terms of 'the heart') that had shifted:

I always used to say, in the 70s and the 80s, one carried the ANC here in your heart, with the Freedom Charter: the people shall govern, there shall be houses for all, the doors of learning and culture shall be open for all... and one really believed that that should be the future. And then the ANC came into power, and you then thought that you knew the ANC, you knew the heartbeat of the ANC. And then like now, we're totally confused: we're called ultra-left, and all of those things.... (FTSS Interview 3)

Despite the formalistic, procedural dimensions of meetings, the use of these culturally-embedded tools of mediation – many of which are carnivalesque in nature – renders the processes of communication in meetings more multi-voiced than in workshops. Culturally-embedded tools of mediation allow workers to celebrate their collective identity and to build each other's confidence to challenge the authority of management. Whereas in workshops, 'performance', code-switching and humour are mainly used by educators (particularly those coming from working-class backgrounds themselves) as a means to 'reach' workers' experiences, in meetings these cultural tools of mediation allow a wide spectrum of ordinary workers to express their 'voice' on issues, share their experiential knowledge with one another, to play educator roles and to contribute to the collective values of this activity system. These symbolic tools were considerably more back-grounded when reports were delivered from 'higher' structures of the union.

The role of written text

The meetings with ordinary workers in the Cleansing Depot were marked by an almost complete absence of written text. In the constitutional meetings however, there were often great piles of documents – all of them in English – waiting to be collected by shop-stewards as they arrived at these meetings. I was struck not only by the abundance of written text, but also by the fact that many of these texts were long and dense, and by the variety of forms of literacy that shop-stewards were expected to deal with¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁶ For example handouts at the CTM meeting included: letters from tax consultants and lawyers, union reports from other structures, draft legal documents, a wages update pamphlet, minutes of previous meetings, and copies of e-mail correspondence (with their own characteristic type-face and layout). One 27-page legal document bore the marks of numerous revisions,

Interestingly, workers' written reports to union substructures also made use of a variety of written genres. For example, in written reports to the BEC from Area Councils, some were brief and terse, written in meeting 'short-hand'; others were detailed and discursive in style, while one was written in a rhetorical, mobilising style. It opened with the paragraph: "Comrades, workers within the Tygerberg Administration are facing a worst crisis. Tygerberg Administration is promoting Privatisation and supporting the Free Market System of Gear," and closed with the words:

"Comrades, now more than ever we need to unite the working class against the onslaught of Globalisation. We must be firmly committed to the vision of socialism. 'Workers must take the lead to success' and Keep Local Government in the hands of the people. 'Forward to Socialism Forward'; 'Forward to Workers taking the Lead to success Forward'. VIVA SAMWU VIVA !!!!!!!!!!!!!!" (SAMWU, 2001, emphasis in the original)

Written text is treated with respect and even reverence. Minutes from meetings and reports from other structures are taken very seriously and carefully checked (particularly financial reports), and in some meetings participants studied the documents they received closely, underlining points from time to time. There is evidence that workers view text as pedagogically useful and reading as important, from the focus group interviews (for example: "But if you just read that information, you'll be equipped" and "Documents is where the information is" (FGI 3)), as well as from accounts of self-study in the interviews with full-time shop-stewards. Over time, union work has become increasingly text-based, necessitating greater engagement with written text. One of the FTSS described her own experiences of this:

What we found out when we were in Tygerberg ... for every little agreement that you did telephonically with the employer, you had to put it in writing. We were forced to do this because they renege on agreements that one reached. It was also something new to us... because we came out of this culture of... if you had spoken telephonically you assumed that's the agreement. But after a while we learnt that, I mean it doesn't work that way any more, every little thing you had to put in writing, you had to write it down, you had to correspond in writing (FTSS Interview 1).

and shop-stewards were told they should read through only those sections with 'strike through's' (representing deletions) or which were underlined (representing additions).

At the same time, and in apparent contradiction to the seriousness with which text is treated, it soon became clear that most shop-stewards *do not read* most of the written texts they receive. This issue was consistently raised as a complaint in meetings; in the BEC meeting for example, the Chairperson expressed anger and frustration over shop-stewards' apparent failure to read an important Bargaining Council report and come with recommendations from their sub-structures. In the CTM meeting, the chairperson berated the delegates: "I am tired of giving documents to comrades and that night it's in the boot of your car...", and later:

You must read your organisational rights agreement.... I was at a number of depots – I don't see your shop-steward manuals anywhere. They must be at home propping up the furniture....

The absence of a 'reading culture' in the union was acknowledged in more than one of the FTSS interviews, and a report of the union reflecting critically on its education programmes also expressed concern over shop-stewards' 'failure to read':

There is a definite problem of shopstewards who can read, failing to read and to educate themselves. This is a vital component of leadership development, communication, and the building of an informed democratic organisation. Without a 'culture of reading' our formal courses are not consolidated. The attempts to cultivate a culture of reading groups or political policy discussion forums have not succeeded but must be continued (SAMWU, 2003a: 19).

The absence of reading is not surprising given that almost all the text distributed in meetings was in a language other than the home language of most shop-stewards, and given the uneven levels of literacy generally amongst shop-stewards and workers. In the Tygerberg meeting shop-stewards experiencing difficulties in reading written reports while giving report-backs, even where they seemed to have been part of drawing up these reports. These difficulties were treated with a mixture of humour, support, teasing and sometimes embarrassment by other shop-steward delegates.

However, as noted in the quote above, there seemed to be a broader culture of antipathy towards written text which extended to those shop-steward leaders who did not experience problems reading English. This was also true about writing: there were frequent complaints of sub-committees failing to submit written

reports, and there was a clear preference on the part of many shop-stewards to communicate these reports orally rather than in written form¹⁰⁷. For example, in the SPM meeting, one shop-steward complained that their representative on the Education and Training (E and T) committee had failed to bring a written report to the meeting:

Ss: Where's the written report?

Education and Training (E and T) representative: The comrade is out of order...!

FTSS: No. This meeting has said on numerous occasions (that you must bring a written report) ...

E and T representative: My report is so short – it (a written report) would have been a waste of paper! Relax – don't stress!

FTSS: Hold on. Education and training is the life-blood of our union. ... Go ahead – but if in future there's no report, we will elect another E and T coordinator. Now go ahead with your report.

How is it possible to make sense of the role of text in union meetings where it is apparently relied upon as a form of communication, but is clearly not made use of directly by most shop-stewards? One answer is that written text performs a set of symbolic rather than practical functions. This has been argued by researchers writing on the 'social uses of literacy' in South Africa (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996). They found that particularly for older people, and in smaller towns and rural areas, literacy is most often used "as display or symbolic statement" in order to improve social standing, status and authority (Prinsloo and Breier, 1996: 173). McEwan and Malan (1996: 207) found that written texts (the bible, letters, documents or certificates) are often "artefacts of performance" rather than messages to be analytically decoded. The use of text as an 'artefact of performance' was clearly evident in the full-time shop-steward's narrative earlier in this chapter of how he had used his red training manual (opening it up deliberately) to assert the power of the union in front of his manager. The large amounts of text in meetings also signals the union's levels of engagement in a multiplicity of forums; also, text is 'in black and white' – literally and figuratively

¹⁰⁷ Also, in terms of shop-stewards carrying out their duties on the shopfloor, "There seems consensus amongst educators and organisers that shop-stewards do not keep documentation and detailed notes of either disciplinary or grievance cases they handle" (Coetzee, 2002: 15).

– and the authority of text is something to depend on in an uncertain and often hostile world. Written text in the form of reports also signals (although does not necessarily enact) the accountability of members or structures to the organisation as a whole.

Tools of mediation embody power relations, and it was clear that much of the text distributed (with the exception of pamphlets¹⁰⁸ and the rhetorically-styled report submitted to the BEC, mentioned earlier) was univocal in form: it was cast in highly legalistic language and served to carry the voice of those in positions of greater social power – management, government and lawyers – to workers. In addition, there was evidence that written text may sometimes be used by union leaders to deflect the demands of the rank-and-file and avoid accountability. In the CTM meeting for example, the chairperson explained that he was not going to distribute a particular document until it had been approved by organising staff and full-time shop-stewards of the branch, and then signed by the municipality:

Ss: Comrade chair, for the sake of transparency, don't you think we should have access to the document? So we can start to

Chair: You're a very good shop-steward. This is exactly why we must wait for the signed document. There's no time now for changes

Ss: But that's exactly the problem – we're sitting out of the process

Chair: Next week we'll meet around the signed document – we'll meet and go through it in detail. I'm tired of giving documents to comrades and that night it's in the boot of your car. We don't want to give you a handful of documents and you don't go through them.

The significance of symbolic tools of mediation in terms of social power cannot be read off 'in abstract' however; it is shaped by history. For example, a notable response in one of the focus-group interviews pointed to the relationship between a 'reading culture', history, and struggle, suggesting that in earlier times 'the struggle' had created a need for a reading culture:

The generation pre-1994 were more curious because they were in a crisis and whatever information they could lay their hands on, they would read. And the unfortunate thing is, you're sitting now with comrades ... who are coming through as shop-stewards and have been in the trenches, but the

¹⁰⁸ The pamphlets tended to be printed in large type-face, and adopt a rhetorical tone.

tendency or feeling is that we are now alright. And especially that our comrades are now running councils and we are not going to have that difficult fight.... So where in the past we prepared ourselves for waging battle by reading and stuff like that, that is also a factor.... (FGI 1)

In other words, it is argued here that a broader change in social context is needed if workers are to reclaim a 'reading culture'.

Thus far, this chapter has shown that 'meeting pedagogy' is more participation-based than 'workshop pedagogy'. It is less didactic than the forms of pedagogy in union education programmes and rests on the invisible pedagogy of peer mentors, but is no less ideologically directive. The union's regulative discourse is not simply imposed from above but is contributed to by a wide range of participants in this community of practice, all of whom share (to a greater or lesser extent) an educator role. Culturally embedded tools of mediation make possible this widely dispersed educator role, while at the same time having the function of subverting 'official authority'. Written text plays a more ambiguous role.

This chapter now turns to examining the sources of knowledge, and forms and use of knowledge in the union meeting context.

Knowledge in union meetings

Workers experience: a key knowledge resource

While union education programmes do engage with participants' experiential knowledge, they also draw on established bodies of formal knowledge (law, economics, social and political theory). In union meetings on the other hand the experiential knowledge of workers plays a far more significant role.

It was clear in the Depot-level meetings that 'ordinary' workers are viewed within the union as a valuable source of knowledge. This was voiced explicitly in one union document which referred to this research exercise, saying:

It is workers who have the experience and knowledge of service delivery. It is workers who work at the front-line. To change how we work and to work more effectively demands that we struggle for more opportunities for workers to look at what can be improved. We need managers who know this. We need managers who are committed to meeting the needs of the poor.... Managers spend half their day sitting in boardrooms discussing

‘how must it be done?’ All we are asking is for workers to be given 3 or 4 hours in a month to discuss the same question (SAMWU, 2004b: 36).

The workplace knowledge of workers is not only technical in nature; the Depot-level meetings, for example, demonstrated workers’ understanding of how to organise the work process, power relations in the workplace as well as more broadly in society, and understanding of working class community needs.

In union education programmes, ‘experience’ is drawn on mainly to explain concepts from outside of workers’ everyday language. In union meetings however, ‘experience’ is more often used inductively. Experience is recontextualised via a number of strategies including sharing and comparing of experience; reflecting critically on that experience in the light of information brought from outside of workers’ immediate experience; and making connections and ‘seeing the bigger picture’. This recontextualisation of experience – the relocation of the ‘anecdotal’ within the ‘general’ and the making of conceptual connections between different issues – may be seen as a particular form of new knowledge production (Hasan, 2002). This production of new knowledge is not an end in itself, but assists workers to strategise and plan their action in a world of considerable complexity, uncertainty and change.

The process of participation in meetings is *itself* a source of new skills and understandings. For example, when the full-time shop-steward who had been particularly active in the Women’s Forum, was asked in her interview what she had learnt from her involvement in meetings of this structure, her response was:

Public speaking ... The ability to read and analyse documents ... The ability to be able to develop policy Debate, develop positions ... Chairing meetings ... Also the practical skills, listening skills, learning to listen to others... I still sometimes don’t show the patience to be able to listen properly as I should ... It taught me how to ... speak to people at whatever level, if you know your issues ... It taught me that you’ve got to do your research, you’ve got to prepare, then you’ll be able to speak to people at whatever level....or whatever qualification you have. So. It’s quite a range of things ... And then the ability to guide others and give direction. So quite a lot of things (FTSS Interview 6).

Thus her involvement in this forum helped her to develop some broader dispositions as well as general, analytical skills. How are these various forms of knowledge put to use?

Weaving of knowledge: a form of ‘praxis’

Meetings act as a vehicle for collective problem-solving, and this problem-solving is, in turn, closely tied to strategising around action. While shop-steward training workshops are geared towards the development of broader concepts, principles and procedures, knowledge in meetings must act as a guide to action. This creates an urgency to obtain strategic information, as illustrated in the SPM meeting when the Chair emphasised in relation to information that the union had requested from an outside research group: “... we need it now! Not six months down the line.... Now!”

This concern with knowledge which is practically useful should not however be equated with an interest only in ‘practical’ knowledge. In many of the meetings described above – perhaps most notably in the long debate within the SPM meeting on the relationship between legal means of struggle, and mass action – participants engaged in a continuous, dialectical movement between concrete and abstract knowledge, between the local and the specific, the general and the global, between conceptual questions and practical, strategic questions. This weaving together of different forms of knowledge is a necessary part of what Gramsci has described as ‘praxis’ – the fusion of theory and practice (see Entwistle, 1979: 160-165) – and is crucial to achieving the purpose of these meetings: that is, to use knowledge of the broader context to draw out general principles from the patterns presented by ‘local’ experiences, in order to strategise effectively around future action.

In contrast to dualist accounts of ‘everyday’ knowledge, the point also needs to be made that the experiential knowledge of workers is both concrete and practical, theoretical and conceptual. Workers engage in theorising their world even when they do not ‘name’ the concepts or deploy specialist language. This can be seen in the following exchange which took place in a discussion around privatisation in Depot-level workshop 1, where one worker put forward a political explanation resting on the logic of the profit motive under capitalism:

FTSS: Why must they (management) bring in the contractors?

Worker: The issue is that they want to fill the pockets of those who have money. They are not helping those who can’t pay.

On many occasions, arguments were not discursively elaborated or made explicitly, and ‘storytelling’ or humour often served to substitute for the use of specialised, conceptual language, helping to make broad points about society and social power relations.

It was argued earlier that the dissemination of knowledge within the union meeting context takes place in a deeply ‘impassioned’ way and critical questions are continuously raised around issues of justice and morality. At the same time, unionists are also seriously concerned with questions of the validity of the information or knowledge they are dealing with. The data presented earlier in this chapter demonstrates the concern in meetings around establishing an accurate picture of ‘conditions on the ground’: why did workers not support picketing action? (Tygerberg meeting); were workers prepared to ‘take to the streets’ and strike or not (SPM meeting)? The need to discover the ‘truth’ – to ‘get things right’ – is critical for the planning of action strategies. The requirement for valid knowledge arises from workers’ engagement with real life problems, rather than an attachment to abstract scientific principles; however, it is arguably equally as stringent, and conventions of scientific research are frequently drawn on in order to check on the validity of information¹⁰⁹.

These interpretations regarding the hybridity of knowledge in union meetings once again challenge dualist conceptions of knowledge. Knowledge in union meetings is multifaceted: it is concrete and abstract, local and specific, general and global. There is constant movement between broader conceptual questions and practical, strategic questions. Knowledge in meetings is ‘impassioned’ as well as tested to assess its validity. It is therefore not possible to locate such knowledge on either side of the ‘knowledge boundary’ between – for example – vertical or horizontal discourses (Bernstein, 1996: 170-172).

Building collective intellectual capacity

Earlier, this chapter made reference to Cole and Engeström’s notion that within activity systems, ‘thought’ must be viewed as a collective, co-operative activity

¹⁰⁹ For example, when Coetzee’s (2003) research report was delivered to the PEF, participants probed the representivity of her sampling methods and the language in which she conducted interviews with shop-stewards.

(1993: 31). This concept effectively captures the way in which knowledge is collectively held within union meetings; for example, people often speak in half-finished sentences, complementing and deepening one another's points.

Meetings not only draw on the collective intellectual capacity of union members but they also help to build 'collective capacity'. There is enormous pressure on unionists to 'spread' their expertise as widely as possible, as illustrated by the Chairperson's comment in the CTM meeting:

Every meeting needs to be educational so that if I'm absent to the structure – if I become City Manager [laughter] – than at least you are equipped to deal with this position as chair. This will be rotated in future.

However, evidence from the meetings observed suggest that 'collective intellectual capacity' is not always built. For example, the chairperson in the PEF meeting expressed great concern over union members' lack of capacity to deal with workplace education and training issues ("the capacity to deal with workplace education and training issues is very low – very worrying") and argued that "(w)e need to build capacity right through". Other participants in this meeting stressed that the sharing of knowledge and expertise can only happen in a democratic environment:

In our CECs¹¹⁰ and NECs¹¹¹ ... issues are discussed, but they are not filtering down to shop-stewards... Comrades are doing reports, but these are not read or discussed at the CEC.... We also perpetuate the problem because we keep on using the same shop-stewards to do everything.... [Yes] A small core does everything and the rest is not used. That's an organisational issue.

If "issues are not filtering down" (or filtering up), and "information that's sitting there in the union is not filtering through" then shop-stewards cannot be expected to be well-informed. The building of 'collective intellectual capacity' is therefore inextricably linked to the democratic functioning of the union. Problems in the democratic functioning of the union which result in restricted or lop-sided patterns of participation may therefore have a significant inhibiting impact on the dissemination of knowledge within the organization – an issue which is related to power relations, and one which arguably is not adequately addressed by the

¹¹⁰ Central Executive Committee meetings.

¹¹¹ National Executive Committee meetings.

Situated Learning theorists. It is to issues of broader relations of social power that this chapter now turns.

The union as a learning organisation: challenging, reflecting or reproducing hegemonic power?

Challenging hegemonic power

In a discussion document on ‘consolidating the union’s education project’, it is stated:

An important aspect of any democratic union is that it should be a “learning organisation”. That a union as an organ of struggle and democratic expression should always be striving to empower its members. That its meetings and activities, and militant actions, are all an environment which teach lessons (SAMWU, 1996: 14).

As noted in Chapter 1, most of the theoretical literature on ‘the learning organisation’ is concerned with how to enhance the global competitiveness of capitalist economic enterprises. The union’s purpose in becoming a ‘learning organisation’ is different however: it is to build workers’ power in order to *challenge* key points of hegemonic power in the capitalist workplace, and more broadly. The counter-hegemonic and transformative orientation of the union was clear in all the meetings observed, and was reflected particularly clearly in the ‘politics of knowledge’ espoused in these meetings.

Participants in meetings seemed keenly aware of the political nature of knowledge and frequently spoke of knowledge as a ‘site of struggle’. They saw knowledge as being used either to advance workers’ interests or as a ‘weapon’ against them. Its value depends on who’s controlling it, and what kind of knowledge. Strong value was placed on workers’ control of education, both within the union and in the workplace. For example, when management’s plans for the training of a new municipal force was reported to the Tygerberg meeting, shop-stewards in the meeting threatened to “declare a dispute, hold marches, issue press releases” unless the Council allowed the union to have some say over this training. Workers also expressed anger at forms of education they saw as an affront to their self respect and dignity. For example, in relation to the training of the new municipal police force, there was derisive laughter in the SPM meeting over the Council’s

offer of a ten week bridging course pretentiously called ‘the Academy’. There were also occasions when union members expressed a critical and sardonic view of ‘schooled knowledge’, as evidenced by humorous remarks such as:

I don’t know these legalistic things.... [laughter] (BEC meeting)

We will have to get a legal opinion on that legal opinion[laughter]
(Tygerberg meeting)

In one meeting, the chairperson welcomed and introduced me: “I will make her a comrade for the day.” He explained that I was from the university and doing some sort of ‘assessment’: “What that assessment is and what she will do with it, only she knows!” He added: “Don’t be threatened by someone new – it is after all your meeting” (CTM meeting).

As noted above, workers were often described as ‘the real experts’. For example in my interview with the full-time shop-steward who had chaired both the SPM meeting and the Depot-level meetings, he was asked to comment on his style of facilitation. His answer underlined his belief that knowledge emerges from within workers’ experiences:

... people have the answer, if one can understand that, the people actually have the answer, and it’s a matter of drawing out those answers from the people. And then adding your own to it, and then putting it into perspective and summarising it to them – it makes magic. So – you don’t have to come there with all the answers. If you let them speak, speak, speak, you know, and – the more they can speak and the less you speak at the outset, it’s so much better. You can actually see where they’re coming from, what it is that they’re wanting, what it is that they’re actually expecting... They have all of the answers, you know (FTSS Interview 2).

Reflecting unequal power relations

However, as in union workshops, union meetings do not only challenge dominant societal power relations but their patterns of participation also reflect and reproduce social inequalities in complex ways. This was evident in the tensions between workers that surfaced or were alluded to in the Depot-level meetings. For example, one Afrikaans-speaking ‘gang’ perceived itself as superior to the ‘boys’ (a derogatory reference to the unskilled, mainly isiXhosa-speaking workers) in the racialised, ‘mental-manual’ division of labour:

W1: We do the work, we bring in the money – but we have to stay down in the wet part (of the depot...).

W2: That's the 'boys' section ...

W1: We are not just labourers – we are uniformed staff, Mr (...) [addressing the full-time shop-steward].

Meetings reflected inequalities based on historical divisions between workers linked to apartheid definitions of 'race', to gender, to workers' differential locations in the division of labour, to differences in language, culture and educational background, and to the urban-rural divide.

Dominant societal power relations were also reflected in the absence of verbal translation in most meetings that served to marginalize many isiXhosa-speaking workers as well as the fact that no written documents were translated from the English. There was clear awareness amongst some union members of the problem of exclusion via language. One of the full-time shop-stewards claimed in his interview that lack of translation was a problem at all levels of the union, and that even the "leadership doesn't understand, don't comprehend... all resolutions taken at national level" (FTSS Interview 2). There was also a critical discussion in the PEF meeting around issues of language and literacy:

FTSS (isiXhosa-speaker): Are there any resources for the union to deal with the issue of translation? Really it's a serious element – not only to Xhosa-speaking but many other members.

Organiser (Afrikaans-speaker): I've got an expensive suggestion: record all material in Xhosa and then distribute ... people who can't properly speak English are at the lowest literacy levels. It is not people at libraries, clinics... but cleansing, markets etc. It's so much easier for them to listen – after a hard day of running behind a truck, they can sit and listen to

Shop-steward (Afrikaans-speaker): Our material is very important – we need to do it in all three languages. In the workshop it's very difficult. But if you present in English – you understand a little bit in English and can then read through it in Afrikaans or Xhosa

In addition to the use of language, the relatively small proportion of women shop-stewards in most of the meetings also reflected the gendered nature of dominant, societal power relations. One of the female, full-time shop-stewards argued that the low numbers of women acted to curb her own participation:

It took me quite long to speak in a BSSC¹¹² – I was quite intimidated: predominantly men, way predominantly men. I think we were four or five women at the time as shop-stewards and I think it almost took me 12 months to open up my mouth for the first time in a BSSC! (FTSS Interview 6)

This same shop-steward had spoken in glowing terms of her experiences of the Women's Forum, and felt bitter that this structure had been replaced over time by a Gender Committee comprising both men and women – a move she saw as a deliberate attempt to silence the increasingly confident voice of women within the union (FTSS Interview 6).

It was argued earlier that the pedagogic value of union meetings depends on their multi-voicedness. It is clear that both language and literacy, as well as the racialised and gendered nature of power relations within the union, act to restrict the multi-voiced character of meetings (the space for contestation of meanings) and exclude some participants from contributing their knowledge in meetings to the 'collective intellectual capacity' of the union.

There is also evidence that the union's traditions of open debate have been weakened or undermined over time, further limiting the multi-voicedness of meetings. One full-time shop-steward argued:

... I find that you cannot be honest any more... you need to camouflage things ... so as to not stir anything, keep quiet and don't raise issues that will spill the beans, don't be honest... they call it 'being strategic', 'being diplomatic', those are the words they use (FTSS Interview 1).

Reflecting dominant ideologies

Despite the counter-hegemonic orientation of union meetings, dominant ideologies were also frequently reflected in workers' own views and outlooks. For example, in a later discussion with the full-time shop-steward who had chaired the Depot-level meetings¹¹³, he expressed the worry that his research simply

¹¹² Branch Shop-stewards Council – a structure which meets every six months, and involves all the shop-stewards in the branch.

¹¹³ Meeting with this shop-steward on 18/10/01.

confirmed how deeply the 'ideology of corporatisation' of public services had colonised workers' thinking around privatisation:

This issue of 'efficient, affordable, effective' – we are being brainwashed by capitalist ideology... which is focusing on how to improve financial returns and maximise profits rather than on service delivery. How do we deal with this? This is what this whole exercise should be about....

He expressed his concern that although the intended purpose of this research was to stem the tide of privatisation in local government, shop-stewards were saying that they are losing the ideological battle against privatisation amongst their members.

In an informal discussion with another full-time shop-steward during a break in the Tygerberg meeting, she expressed the view that the role of the shop-steward had also changed along with changes in the organisational and political context. Previously, being a shop-steward was a political commitment, but now workers often stood for shop-steward elections because they were hoping for promotion. Increasingly it was the more formally-educated workers who were elected, often people who no longer understood or identified with the commitment that this role involves. The nature of the shop-steward role had also changed, becoming far more tied up with legal niceties, whereas in the past "we just used to take action". Today shop-stewards are not prepared to give of their own time: "We used to debate long into the night" or "whole days on weekends"; "... if we wanted to go to a shop-steward workshop we just used to book off sick". Now shop-stewards refuse to request extra time off for meetings – "they just accept management's rules" about how much time they are allowed for union meetings.

Dominant ideologies were also refracted through a number of ambiguities and contradictions in workers' attitudes towards knowledge and learning in these meetings. In apparent contradiction to the critical awareness of the 'politics of knowledge' described above, there was also strong respect for those with 'schooled knowledge' – for example, those with technical and labour law expertise. In addition, workers were sometimes portrayed as ignorant or stupid. Organisers and office bearers accused shop-stewards of 'not learning properly' from their training, or 'not bothering' to understand complex documents. There was often a self-conscious awareness of the mental/manual division of labour –

for example, in the PEF meeting, where the argument was made for producing audio-tapes for “people who can’t properly speak English (and who) are at the lowest literacy levels. It is not people at libraries, clinics... but cleansing, markets etc.” In one Western Cape branch, members refused to elect a worker who had been nominated for the position of chair because he was illiterate. The shop-steward who reported this to me was of the view that “new shop-stewards don’t want to be chaired by someone ‘below them’”(Tygerberg meeting).

The question of workers’ attitudes towards literacy and ‘schooled knowledge’ was explored in my interviews with the full-time shop-stewards. One tried to explain the difficult contradictions facing workers and the union in a workplace context which makes increasing written textual demands on worker representatives:

Labour, trade unions, are in such a dilemma. This is the age we are in ... the high-tech age ... A shop-steward gets served with a charge sheet. He must represent the member, he doesn’t know what the hell the charge is: “Comrade ..., wat’s dit hierso?” (*What’s this?*) I explain to him what the charge sheet says. So it becomes more and more demanding for people to be able to read and write, although we say we don’t want to make it a prerequisite or a criteria when you are elected ... But it does afterwards become a need that you do have that literacy level. ... There’s got to be a skill, or ... to be able to interpret legal language You have to read in black and white ... you gotta have a level of understanding and interpreting what they are saying to you, otherwise you mess completely, you know, and the employer knows this, They’ll use language so that you cannot understand it. So ... you can’t always sit with comrades who cannot have a level of reading, or not writing.... (FTSS Interview 2).

His colleague countered however by arguing that requiring all shop-stewards to be literate would ‘rob’ the union of its essence:

But I still think that we take away the nature of trade unions if ... the trade union put the condition that in order to become a shop-steward you must be able to read and write. I believe that would be away from the nature of the trade union. ... To me it’s important that shop-stewards are elected on the basis that they are committed to the trade union, that they’re committed to improving workers’ conditions, that they’re committed to contribute to the working struggle... generally (FTSS Interview 1).

These two quotes together capture the complex and contradictory social purpose of the trade union – an organisation that is caught between conflict with, and pragmatic accommodation to, the dominant social order.

Concluding comments

Drawing on Situated Learning theory, and following Ball (2003), I have argued that the union may be seen as a community of practice. The evidence in this chapter shows that in its day-to-day functioning, learning is mostly tacit in form and takes place through guided participation in the form of mentoring and modelling or by being 'thrown in at the deep end'. Roles and identities are mainly acquired unconsciously through mutual engagement in the joint enterprise of the union (Wenger, 1998: 72-3). Following Scribner's (1997: 313) notion of 'intelligence sedimented in organisation', the union organisation itself may be viewed as a mediation tool: by participating in the organisational rituals of meetings and other forms of organisational involvement, workers also acquire the principles and practices of workers' control.

In addition to learning through 'acquisition' (Gee, 1990: 145-149), there are also forms of pedagogy taking place in meetings. I have drawn on Bernstein's categories to argue that pedagogy may assume 'invisible' forms where peer mentors help other workers to recontextualise their local experiences within a broader context and to grasp 'the bigger picture'. In doing so, a cycle of learning – beginning with experience and working inductively towards broader principles and common understandings and strategies for action – is enacted. Contrary to classical Experiential Learning theories, this is a deeply collective process rather than merely an individual one. Peer mentoring may also take the form of didactic interventions – visible pedagogy – where roles and values are communicated explicitly. Whether 'invisible' or 'visible', this pedagogy acts to impart a powerful, counter-hegemonic regulative discourse; this is not simply imposed 'from above' – ordinary workers contribute to this regulative discourse in significant ways.

The division of labour in this activity system is weak. Educator and learner roles are unstable, shifting and interchangeable, and pedagogic authority is widely dispersed and shared (very weakly classified). A range of ordinary shop-stewards may step into the educator role although some workers come to the fore on account of their role as boundary workers, bringing important contextual information from different communities of practice. This weak specialisation of

the educator role, and the interchangeability of educator and learner roles allows ordinary workers to add their 'voice' to the union's rules of practice.

The multi-voicedness of meetings is enhanced also by the use of rich, culturally-embedded tools of mediation. Following Bakhtin (1965/1994), I have pointed to the carnivalesque qualities of the language including ventriloquism, repetition, performative story-telling, sardonic humour, emotion and strong body language used in these meetings. Unlike structured education programmes where such tools of mediation are used mostly to 'reach' the experiences of workers, in meetings they represent a dialogical form of communication between workers and they function to build working class identity and subvert 'official authority' and 'established order'. Written text in union meetings assumes mainly 'univocal' forms, and its social significance is complex and ambiguous. It seems primarily to function symbolically as an 'artefact of performance' (McEwan and Malan, 1996: 207) rather than mediating information or understanding.

One key question guiding this research was: how are different forms of knowledge valued in union pedagogy? In meetings (far more than in education programmes) workers' experience is the most important knowledge resource drawn upon. Rather than being used as a form of scaffolding to explain new concepts (as in workshops), in meetings 'local' experiences are used inductively to arrive at general conclusions or principles. As in workshops, there is a process of dialectical weaving together of different forms of knowledge in meetings, which may be seen as a form of 'praxis' – a fusion of theory and practice. In addition to this, new knowledge and skills are produced through the making of conceptual connections as well as through experience of participation itself. Experiential knowledge cannot be coded simply as 'local' or practical but is also general and conceptual, transgressing the knowledge boundaries proposed by dualist conceptions of knowledge.

As in workshops, the social purpose of 'meeting' pedagogy is ambiguous. This is evidenced in the contradictions between its transformative intention and espoused 'politics of knowledge' on the one hand, and its reflection and reproduction of hegemonic power relations on the other. Unequal power relations are reflected in the choice of language used in meetings, the reliance on (mainly) univocal forms of written text, and patterns of inclusion and exclusion based on 'race', urban-

rural divides and gender, all of which act to limit the building of 'collective intellectual capacity' and hence the multi-voicedness of this activity system. The union's ambiguous social purpose is also reflected in ambivalent attitudes towards which knowledge is of greater value: workers experiential knowledge or more formal kinds of knowledge often mediated through written text.

Despite these tensions and contradictions or possibly *because* of them (Engeström sees tensions and contradictions as productive of learning and new knowledge – see Engeström, 2002: 52-3), it is still possible to see in the day-to-day organisational activities of the union the 'hidden potentialities of the everyday' (Gardiner, 2000: 6). The next chapter will focus on how at certain moments in history, the 'hidden potentialities of the everyday' are made more visible through mass action, and in the case of this study, a major national strike of the union.

CHAPTER 6:

‘MASS ACTION TEACHES’: LEARNING, PEDAGOGY AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE STRIKE

Introduction

This chapter is the last of three chapters that describe and analyse selected sites of pedagogy in the union, and considers questions of learning, pedagogy and knowledge in the context of mass action. The chapter argues that there are two, closely-related pedagogical dimensions to the strike. Firstly, the strike can be viewed as an experience of ‘organisational learning’ for workers and union leaders; it also acts as an ‘evaluative moment’ by putting the success of the union’s pedagogic work to the test. Secondly, the strike’s broad, counter-hegemonic role means that it may also be viewed as an exercise in ‘public education’ aimed at influencing the views and actions of employers and the public at large, thus affording its participants a collective, educator role.

This chapter begins by looking at the educative impact of mass action historically within this union. It then goes on to focus on SAMWU workers’ experiences of a major, national strike in July 2002, providing two detailed vignettes of key moments at the beginning and at the end of the strike. A third vignette, based on an interview conducted with a group of workers just after the end of the strike is also presented. The remainder of the chapter analyses the strike through ‘a learning lens’ and considers each of its pedagogic dimensions in turn.

Educative impact of mass action historically

Rudin argues that the defining feature of the CTMWA (SAMWU’s predecessor) was that throughout its history, it never engaged its members in strike action. However, by the time the union joined COSATU in 1985, it had already undergone a marked internal transformation. There is evidence that this transformation was largely brought about by the impact on union members of mass action taking place outside of the union at the time.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a wave of struggles by coloured working class communities and school pupils swept through Cape Town. There were also two major strikes¹¹⁴ where municipal workers in the CTMWA were called upon to provide material and moral support (Rudin, 1996: Chapter 5). There is evidence that these struggles acted as a catalyst for coloured municipal workers, providing them with a model of how to take action, and giving them the confidence to do so. John Ernstzen, who was the general secretary of the CTMWA at the time, recalls the impact of these struggles:

... for me, personally I think the emergence of a GWU (General Workers Union – LC) and the forging of links with the Food and Canning and African Food and Canning... Liz Abrahams, Lizzie Phike and many other of those worker leaders, particularly African worker leaders, that I got more and more into contact with. If I look back, I wouldn't be able to recognise what that had done to me in a relatively short period ... (Archival interview J).

Under Ernstzen's leadership, the CTMWA was to undergo a process of democratisation and political re-alignment that led the union into affiliation with COSATU when it was established in 1985.

In July-August 1987, just before the launch of SAMWU, refuse workers in Cape Town embarked on a two-month, successful 'go-slow' programme of action. This was the first time that coloured municipal workers in this city had engaged in mass action of any kind; their action was essentially driven from below by ordinary workers and grassroots worker leadership, with the union's leadership under pressure to follow workers' increasingly militant mood. One of the union's new layer of militant worker leaders recalled:

.... and the people who pushed the militancy in the union was the cleansing shop-stewards ... (they) were people who were always taken for granted, but when the services were not delivered, I mean, it would be very noticeable

... the first go-slow was completely spontaneous, it came from the bottom. In fact the leadership got the fucking shock of their life. They got a shock of

¹¹⁴ In the Fatis and Monis strike of 1979, Coloured workers in the Cape Town food industry (supported by the Food and Canning Workers Union) took strike action for the first time in nearly twenty years, while in 1980, mainly African workers in the abattoirs struck, supported by the General Workers' Union.

their life, and in fact was at completely at sea as to how to deal with this issue (Archival interview S).

Amongst Cape Town's municipal workers, it was the cleansing workers who had had their first taste of militant action, and they would, in turn, intensify the process of organisational change under way in the union.

The unbannings of the ANC and other political organisations in 1990 is often construed as a crucial turning point beyond which the transition to democracy began and mass action subsided. However, the wave of militant action amongst municipal workers in the late 1980s continued well into the 1990s. In 1990 alone, there were over fifty work stoppages and strikes by municipal workers nationally, with over fifty thousand workers taking part in action (SAMWU, 1997: 24).

The growth in confidence amongst coloured municipal workers came to a head in June 1990 when an estimated ten thousand municipal workers from the Cape Town branch of SAMWU invaded the Civic Centre in what was to be their first ever, full-scale strike (SAMWU, 1997: 24). The strike lasted for 12 days, and was hailed as an explosion of political consciousness and a "shattering (of) the image of a complacent coloured working class" (SAMWU, n.d.). Salie Manie, a leading figure in the strike, recalls how participation in this action impacted on the 'consciousness' of workers:

... the amazing thing out of that was that you would find that people who had never ever been involved in politics was shouting "Viva ANC! Viva COSATU", and the political slogans that they were shouting, and ... on the posters that they made – their own posters – all reflected a radical shift in the consciousness, the political consciousness of the workers from where they were just before that and what happened to them during the period of the strike (Archival interview S).

After the strike, workers had new confidence to confront management: "... we really were working with our heads held high and our chests pushed out..." (Archival interview S).

The strike also – for the first time – evoked solidarity between Coloured and African municipal workers. In Lingulethu West (still under the administration of Black Local Authorities at the time), the largely African workforce took action. One of the African worker leaders recalls:

... the workers wanted to know on the ground what was happening. Then we had to report, because most of them were getting the news out of the newspapers and things like that, and they were questioning us “What is happening? Why are we not supporting (them) because we have a slogan – it says ‘Injury to one – an injury to all’ ”. Then the workers came up in solidarity, in support of their comrades (Archival interview B).

One of the union’s full-time shop-stewards at the time this research was conducted remembers this strike as being a watershed event in her own ideological development, and in her involvement with the union. When asked how long she’d been active in the union, she responded: “I started off in 1990, with the 1990 Cape Town wage strike”. As a clerical worker who had largely ‘stood on the sidelines’ and observed the strike, she learnt that:

we can’t expect labourers to fight for us all the time ... I think at the end, the commitment that the cleansing workers at the time showed towards the strike – being there every morning, disciplined to a great extent in the Good Hope Centre ... then it struck me that we ... can’t expect the people earning less than us to fight for us all the time (FTSS Interview 6).

Cape Town municipal workers were also part of SAMWU’s first national strike in 1993 and in the following years, took part in numerous instances of mass action as part of the union’s Living Wage and Anti-Privatisation campaigns. One full-time shop-steward argued that workers’ experiences of mass action over the fifteen years prior to my research built the experience and confidence of workers when they embarked on their national strike in 2002:

... I’ve been involved in quite a few strikes... three major strikes, and then some plant-level strikes. You know – when we were still allowed to have wild-cat strikes. ... If I compare this strike (in 2002 – LC) versus the ’91 strike which was our first 11-day strike, I’m of the view that workers are more familiar with striking, and they’ve got more courage, you know ... So it’s not like something brand new where they would be concerned, or worried about police ... (FTSS Interview 3).

The history of SAMWU shows that involvement in mass action had a major impact on collective learning within the union. I was interested to explore in more depth exactly how this learning takes place, who plays pedagogic roles in this process, and what forms of knowledge are acquired. When the union embarked on a major, national strike in the very middle of my fieldwork, this presented an

opportunity to employ more ethnographic-type methods to document processes of learning and forms of pedagogy and knowledge in the context of a strike.

The following section will present a background to, and overview of the union's 2002 strike, both nationally and more specifically in the greater Cape Town area, drawing on documentary sources as well as my own observations. This overview will include detailed vignettes of two events observed during and after the strike, notably: a march of workers through the centre of the city on day one of the strike, and an assessment of the strike carried out by one of the branch's Area Councils approximately two weeks after the strike. A third vignette details a focus group interview conducted with a large group of municipal cleansing workers, approximately seven months after the strike. (See Appendix 3 for full dates and locations of these events).

The union's 2002 strike

A national overview of the strike

In July 2002, SAMWU embarked on a three week, national strike that was to become the largest strike¹¹⁵ since the democratic elections of 1994. In addition to wage demands, workers' support for the strike arose out of feelings of anger and frustration towards municipal councillors and managers who were perceived as earning exorbitant salaries and being unconcerned about workers' needs. One worker was quoted in a newspaper as saying of ANC councillors: "They have forgotten their constituencies: the workers in particular who remain their trump card whenever they want to ensure their victory in every local government election" (Sunday Independent, 2002a).

My observations of Cape Town branch meetings and a national-level workshop had suggested that there was a significant number of union members who were 'ready to strike'. However many amongst the union's leadership expressed concern that not enough preparation had been done, and that not enough strategising had taken place around how to deal with the issue of Essential Services workers, who are legally barred from striking. There was also concern

¹¹⁵ In terms of number of working days lost.

that most workers imagined that this strike was equivalent to ‘a march’, a ‘stay-away’ or ‘protest’, and did not understand that they could be embarking on a lengthy cessation of work. Other than the Collective Bargaining workshop aimed at union staff (see Chapter 4), there were no education programmes to prepare workers for the strike. However the union head office did distribute circulars and pamphlets (one pamphlet was printed in seven languages – SAMWU 2002d) and one issue of the union’s Campaigns Bulletin was devoted to topics such as making a decision to strike, essential services and pickets (SAMWU, 2002c).

Workers went out on strike on Tuesday 2 July. Levels of support for the strike were uneven, but, at the beginning at least, they were higher than expected or predicted by the union’s leadership¹¹⁶. As the strike progressed through its first week, newspapers described ‘scenes of chaos and violence’ erupting in cities and towns across the country – “ ... scenes reminiscent of apartheid era protests” (Cape Times, 2002a). Shots were fired, shops barricaded, some strikers were shot by police and municipal officials, and marchers were arrested. There were some reports of strikers attacking non-strikers, and one worker being shot by a fellow worker. Strikers’ actions included marches, ‘trashing’¹¹⁷, burning tires in the city streets, occupations of municipal offices, and picketing. In the Eastern Cape, strikers dumped buckets of human excrement in front of municipal buildings, and some strikers damaged municipal equipment (Dispatch Online, 2002; The Citizen, 2002).

SAMWU’s press statements sought to convince the public of the justice of workers’ demands. In an article in the *Sowetan* the day preceding the strike, the union’s General Secretary argued that some municipal workers earned “less than the cell-phone allowances of many mayors” (The *Sowetan*, 2002). There was widespread media coverage of the strike, some of it reflecting a groundswell of public opinion in sympathy with the strikers and opposition to the high salaries of municipal managers. The employer organisation, SALGA, found it necessary to publish a full-page advert in the press (Sunday Times, 2002) to explain its reluctance to give in to SAMWU’s demands. The union’s appeals for community

¹¹⁶ The union estimated that over the duration of the strike, between 100 000 and 120 000 of its members participated in the strike (Sunday Independent, 2002b; SABC, 2002).

¹¹⁷ Emptying garbage bins on to the streets.

support had some measure of success: some marches were supported by members of the community and other organisations¹¹⁸, and the strikers received statements of support from a wide range of organisations.

The strike in Cape Town

During the week preceding the strike, the Cape Metro branch held depot meetings to inform workers about the strike and formed a committee that would meet regularly during the strike (SAMWU 2002f). It issued a pamphlet outlining its programme of action for the first week, including a march through central Cape Town to deliver a memorandum to the Mayor, a general meeting of all strikers in the Good Hope Centre, decentralised pickets at workplaces, and a Branch Shop-stewards Council to assess the first week's actions and plan for the following week.

On the first day of the strike, an estimated nine thousand SAMWU members marched on the Civic Centre, where a strong contingent of police had erected barbed wire barriers around the complex. These are my observations of the march.

Vignette 1: The march

It is day one of the strike in Cape Town. Busloads of workers are beginning to arrive at a meeting point, ready to march to the Civic Centre where the Cape Metropolitan Council offices are located. There is a high proportion of African workers amongst the strikers, and a shop-steward from Mfuleni tells me that almost 100% of workers from his depot are there.

There is a strong sense of heightened emotion, an air of festivity, and a celebratory atmosphere. Workers are toying-toying; one worker wearing white gloves is playing on a homemade plastic drum (reminiscent of members of the 'Cape Minstrels' who march in the annual carnival just after New Year), and there is some open consumption of alcohol. Workers' sense of confidence – their absolute certainty that justice is on their side – is almost palpable.

Many marchers are carrying posters, some clearly mass-produced by the union's head office, while others are homemade. They carry slogans such as:

¹¹⁸ PEO, ILRIG Debate on the SAMWU strike: Community House, Salt River, 1 August 2002.

Phantsi managers and councillors eating themselves fat while the workers starve!

Down with Gear, Starvation wages

To Hell! It's War!

Privatisation equals Retrenchments equals Poverty

Forward to R2200 minimum wage

Rate payers note: while workers struggle to stay alive, top managers get R62000!

The march begins and makes its way down Darling Street, led by a large truck with a stage on the back, on which leaders stand and lead the singing, or call instructions through a megaphone. The march is difficult to control: at the bottom of Adderley street it threatens to break up, but eventually workers re-group outside the Civic Centre, which they find surrounded by razor wire and a large contingent of police.

Rousing speeches are delivered from the stage on the back of the truck that is now parked in front of the mass gathering of strikers. First a speaker from the South African Communist Party (SACP) addresses the crowd, followed by a SAMWU speaker, a COSATU speaker, and finally by the SAMWU General Secretary:

Amandla! Viva! Forward to a Living Wage!

The bosses aim to smash our union... The Civic Management who sit in there earns R1,4million a year. We are asking for a R300 increase...

This strike is not just about wages, but about what's going to happen to your job, about what's going to happen to your services.

We demand a Living Wage!

Viva, SAMWU, Viva!

Speeches are interspersed with pleas to marchers not to 'intimidate' the police, and with calls of 'Amandla!' and intermittent singing and toyi-toying. Some

council officials emerge into the barbed wire enclosure to receive the union's memorandum, but disappear quickly when sounds like gun shot ring out. There are pleas over the loudspeaker: "Please comrades, stop throwing missiles! Order, comrades, order!" "Please comrades – only the leadership on this truck...." Eventually, the memorandum is delivered, and the marchers begin to toyi-toyi and sing their way back to their buses.

In the Cape Town branch there was majority support for the strike in the beginning, but there was a slow decline over time. IMATU, the rival municipal workers' union, did not officially support the strike¹¹⁹. Strikers were mainly drawn from lower-paid workers, with minimal support from white-collar workers. Many non-striking workers negotiated with management to stay at home and were not visible at all during the strike. In the central parts of Cape Town, most workers simply continued to work and many of the branch's 250 shop-stewards did not support the strike.

On the third day of the strike, I observed a meeting at the branch's Athlone office, attended by full-time shop-stewards, branch office bearers and organisers. The atmosphere of the meeting was tense and charged: earlier that morning, at a mass meeting held at the Good Hope Centre, there were skirmishes between strikers and the police. Representatives of the different sub-structures critically reflected on the uneven levels of support for the strike thus far, and engaged in heated debate on how to account for this the lack of support. Some argued that it was 'shop-stewards who were the problem', while others argued there was a 'general lack of commitment' towards the strike:

Branch Chairperson: These comrades who participated in today's meeting – emotionally they were not there. They were sitting outside abusing substances.... Some leadership was outside, while other workers inside were drunk.

¹¹⁹ Although some of its members did join the strike.

Running through the debates was a concern about sticking to the 'rules' agreed to around the strike¹²⁰, and shop-stewards' responsibility to 'keep discipline' amongst the striking workers.

In the second week of the strike, workers held depot-level pickets, marches and demonstrations across the Cape Peninsula, and pamphleteered bus stations and public areas in the central business district in an attempt to rally support from fellow workers as well as the community. In other areas, workers took more drastic action: they 'trashed' streets in Bellville and Crossroads, and marchers disrupted traffic in Plumstead. Radio coverage of the strike showed there was widespread support for the strikers but community members expressed their dissatisfaction with 'trashing', and union leadership tried to persuade members not to 'trash'.

In the middle of the second week of the strike, SAMWU was refused permission by the Cape Town Unicity to hold a march in the centre of Cape Town (Cape Times, 2002b). On my visit to the union offices on that day, frantic activity was taking place: shop-stewards were talking on the phone, sending and receiving faxes, listening to radio reports of incidents of police opening fire on striking workers, and going through solidarity messages. Respect for the 'rules' of the strike – so obvious at the last meeting – had declined a week later. Upstairs in a hall, a meeting of about one hundred shop-stewards vowed to march the next day even if they had to confront the police.

Workers finally returned to work three weeks after the start of their strike, ultimately accepting a compromise wage offer from SALGA¹²¹. Approximately two weeks after the end of the strike, I attended a Tygerberg Area Council meeting – a substructure whose meetings I had attended once before – which aimed to evaluate shop-stewards' experiences of the strike. Events revealed that this meeting was in some ways a continuation of the mass action of the strike.

¹²⁰ Some branch leaders had met earlier in the day with management to negotiate mutually acceptable picketing rules.

¹²¹ South African Local Government Association – a national, municipal employers' association.

Vignette 2: Post-strike assessment meeting

As I arrive, some of the Area Council's office-bearers are meeting with a handful of shop-stewards. The chairperson is trying to help shop-stewards fill in a questionnaire (in English) drawn up by the union's head office, and seeking detailed information about the strike.

As more shop-stewards arrive the meeting is formally opened, but it is immediately adjourned as one of the full-time shop-stewards calls on participants to stage a protest. He explains that management is running a workshop downstairs on 'restructuring', and that the union is angry at what it sees as management's attempts to use the opportunity created by the strike to push ahead with 'restructuring', without consulting the union.

About 22 shop-stewards crowd down the stairs to the hall, singing and chanting. In the hall about 50 white-collar employees are receiving a power-point presentation on 'restructuring'. The presentation is disrupted as union members take over the stage, toying and singing, with the branch chair occasionally making humorous comments over the microphone: "Comrades – you are wasting ratepayers money – you must return to work!" (This is a sardonic reference to what striking workers were repeatedly told by Council management during the strike).

Management calls in the municipal police (referred to by workers as "the men in black" – a humorous reference to a movie by the same name) who begin earnestly to talk to the SAMWU shop-stewards. Eventually it is agreed that the workshop will adjourn for five minutes and then be allowed to continue. The union activists leave the hall singing, and return to their own meeting.

The Area Council meeting reconvenes to focus on a critical assessment of the strike. The full-time shop-steward assumes the role of facilitator and introduces the evaluative exercise:

Now you must talk to us about the strike. The pro's and con's – what took place. You can talk to us – let's discuss the strike.

(He writes on the board: 'weaknesses / strengths').

Shop-stewards from each depot give reports; they reflect critically on issues such as the tactics of management to break the strike; uneven support for the strike, with little support amongst white-collar (mostly white and coloured) workers, but substantial support from African workers; and attempts to force non-striking workers to join the strike or to persuade casual workers from taking the strikers' jobs.

There is a tense moment when two shop stewards from the same depot – one an African worker from Mfuleni who supported the strike, and another, a coloured worker from Delft who did not strike – confront one another. The worker from Mfuleni tells a long story about how, while he and other shop stewards struggled to get workers to support the strike, the Delft shop-steward refused to strike. Other workers at Delft “feel that the shop-steward betrayed them!” There is a heated response from the Delft shop steward who tries to justify why he couldn't support the strike (because of ‘financial problems’). Amidst heated protests and reactions from the floor that “we were on strike!”, the shop-steward from Delft defends himself: “I never betrayed anyone! ... This house can do what it must with me. But we are shop stewards together....” The full-time shop-steward tries to regain control of the meeting:

*There are two things I can do: allow you at each other's throats, or ask you to clinically assess what went on so that the union can go forward.
That's what I'm going to do....*

Some months after the end of the strike, I conducted a focus group interview with a large and shifting group of workers in a Cleansing depot, aimed at capturing workers' subjective experiences of the strike. This interview was set up for me by the full-time shop-steward for this depot and took place early one morning in a large open room in the ‘administration block’. Workers continuously wandering in and out over the hour and a half hours I was there, with the size of the group ranging from between two and 25 workers. The majority were Afrikaans-speaking, and the interview took place in a mixture of English and Afrikaans. The interview was unstructured and yielded rich information along a number of themes in addition to the strike, including conditions in the workplace, and workers' memories of earlier times.

Vignette 3: Focus group interview with Cleansing workers on their experiences of the strike

I begin by asking workers whether they supported the strike. The workers claim that they voted to strike, that the majority were in favour of the strike, and emphasise that "The union doesn't decide the strike, the workers decide...." When asked why they supported the strike, they respond: "When it's time for an increase, it's time for a strike mos¹²²", and "Because there's a future for all of us...."

Workers describe the strike as being "like a war", with comments like:

- You see more policemen than strikers ... They (the police – LC) try to protect them (management – LC) and let us get hurt ... And what do they say: "Cool off gentlemen! Cool off gentlemen !" And how the devil can you cool off when you're fighting*
- It's worse today... (compared to earlier strikes – LC)*
- And why: they've got bullets, guns, batons...and our strikers go there with bare hands....*
- With bare hands. And empty stomach.*
- They've got guns, they've got batons ... but our workers come with bare hands ... Huh? It makes no sense! Are we like animals they're going to shoot in the bush, or what? ... What?... We are also human beings, just like them, huh? And we are also workers just like them just doing their job.*

Some express frustration that the strike was necessary at all:

W1: ons het gestrike! Ons het gestrike! (We went on strike! We went on strike!) For an increase – but we don't see that increase. But you hear of R80 billion lost in the council ... Why can't they pay that money out to the people, why must we go on strike? ... because they're (the council – LC) trying to get tourists. The people in our own country don't have food in their stomachs but they want to make the country beautiful for the

¹²² It's 'just' time to strike.

tourists....You first look after your people in your own yard before you look after people from other cities [Yes....]

Despite their support for the strike, the workers express anger towards their union because of the absence of a strike fund. A number express their feelings in impassioned and verbal performances (with words underlined to show emphasis in oral rendition):

- *We are the union, we support the union, but we had no money, we had to go to sleep without food.*
- *... the union, they must look! We were on strike for three weeks without them helping us with a cent! The rule of the council is “no work, no pay” so we didn’t get paid. But the union didn’t say: here is a 500gm bag of sugar and a packet of tea. But they want us to strike – and then they sit there in their offices, ‘op hulle gatte’ (on their arses), with full wages, with no deductions, but they don’t look after the workers.... We pay subs so that they can sort things out with council, always they are seeking our help, our help, but we pay for them.... But they seek our help, our help. At the end of the month, they get paid full salaries, but we have to go home (empty...) to our children....*
- *This is my last strike, they won’t get me to strike again, because they don’t keep their word. If you’re going to strike for a certain number of days – that was their words, not mine, their words – if you strike for a certain of days, they said they would give us money... now they want to talk about a strike fund, strike fund, strike fund ... but there was no such thing as strike fund, because there’s not enough money, they are wasting our money....*
- *...They use us on the floor – we have to go and jump, and viva, and whatever, and when the strike is over, they don’t come and see us, they don’t come to the depots to salute: viva! comrades, and say this happened and that happened, we called off the strike ... this is how far we’ve come... what did they manage to achieveSo that we can get that information....*

Towards the end of the interview, workers reminisce about earlier times:

- ...*They're taking our jobs away. In the old era, there was a job for each and every person, you can say... I could take out my jacket and go to another job. But now... you must think twice or three times....*
- ...*When Madiba was in the tronk (jail), you had a struggle then, but now that he's out you haven't got that struggle any more, because you've voted for him....*

I ask one of the oldest workers whether he remembered the pre-COSATU union (the CTMWA), and the General Secretary at that time, and he responds enthusiastically:

- Ja! Now that you can call a union...! He was a true leader... He would always be there... He wasn't walking alongside us, right? He even went in front of us; it was very hard to unionise then – it was during the apartheid era, and at that time the police didn't play around; but still he was a true leader. Today when the leaders walk alongside us, the police don't know who's the leader; but then, when John Ernstzen walked in front, they knew exactly who's the leader.

The remainder of this chapter will interrogate the processes within and surrounding the 2002 strike 'through a learning lens' by critically exploring how workers' collective action may be seen as an example of pedagogy, and by identifying the knowledge and power dimensions of the strike. In addition to my observations during the strike, this analysis will draw on additional sources of data: individual and focus group interviews; information shared in a public debate on the significance of the strike¹²³; and documentary sources including reflections on the strike in one of the union's shop-steward training manuals published after the strike (SAMWU, 2004a).

As noted earlier, it will be argued here that the strike should be viewed as 'pedagogical' in two respects. Firstly, the strike involved significant learning on the part of its participants. Secondly, in addition to the strike's primarily

¹²³ ILRIG Debate on the SAMWU strike: Community House, Salt River, 1 August 2002.

instrumental function – to force employers to accede to workers’ demands – it was a deliberate attempt to influence the views and actions of those outside of the union. This section will therefore analyse two separate but interlinked, pedagogical dimensions of the strike, following the broad lines of enquiry pursued in earlier chapters: forms of pedagogy, educator and learner roles, tools of mediation, forms of knowledge, and the social purpose of the pedagogy in question.

The strike as ‘organisational learning’

The mass action previously described was experienced by workers as an intense and condensed learning experience. According to one full-time shop-steward, “Whatever else the strike was – it was a massive learning experience...” (ILRIG debate). This section will examine the strike as an instance of ‘organisational learning’, involving learning experiences on the part of workers and union activists who supported and participated in the strike. The strike will also be considered as an ‘evaluative moment’ when the success of the union’s education work (amongst other aspects of its work) is put to the test.

What forms of pedagogy and knowledge were involved in this ‘organisational learning’?

Forms of pedagogy

A ‘special’ community of practice

In union pedagogy, it is regarded as a truism that union members learn from strikes, and that strikes play a role in exposing organisational weaknesses. For example, in the union’s shop-steward training manual produced after the 2002 strike (SAMWU, 2003d: 26), one of the workshop activities asks shop-stewards to “reflect on, and learn lessons from the strike that will help you to build strong workers action in the future”, and to “identify the strengths and weaknesses of the union that the strike has thrown up”. How did learning during the strike take place?

Learning largely took place tacitly through participation in the special community of practice thrown up during the strike. For example, my visits to the union office

revealed activity that was quite frenzied – apparently unconscious, unaware, unreflective. Union activists were grappling with a large number of multi-faceted, complex issues, and having to deal with them literally ‘on the run’. Through participating under immense pressure in the activities surrounding the strike, lessons were being learnt and skills acquired which might only be reflected upon or acknowledged later. Here, the Situated Learning theorists’ notions of learning as ‘doing’ and ‘knowing in action’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991) were most clearly illustrated, and the wide-spread participation by members of this community of practice created a rich and multi-voiced environment for learning.

Critical reflection-in-action

This tacit learning was complemented by moments of self-conscious, critical reflection on experience in the midst of the strike. For example, in the strike assessment meeting observed on the third day of the strike, worker leaders and organisers engaged in a heated debate about how to account for the drop in support for the strike, and the lack of ‘discipline’ amongst some shop-stewards. There was a lengthy process of sharing experiences, drawing lessons and debating new courses of action, accompanied by explicit awareness of the importance of learning from the experience of the strike. Consciousness that this use of experience was part of a learning process was clearly illustrated in comments like: “We need to learn from these things – we need to tighten up, spell out everyone’s role, say exactly what’s expected of each and everyone. That’s what this morning taught me...” and “We need to learn from what has taken place here, not just for tomorrow but for the future.” Worker leaders thus assumed the role (temporarily at least) of the ‘critical reflective practitioner’ that Schön (1983) argues underpins ‘good pedagogic practice’.

Knowledge and mass action

What were the key sources of knowledge drawn on in the processes of ‘organisational learning’, and what new knowledge and understandings were constructed before and after the strike?

Drawing on historical experience

It has been noted in earlier chapters that different sources of knowledge carry authority in different sites of the union. Union workshops frequently draw on

‘outside expertise’, while in union meetings, ‘boundary workers’ knowledge of developments in a range of sites within the union and other institutional forums plays a key contextualising role. In the strike, however, it was to history and historical experience that union members seemed to turn most often as an authoritative source of knowledge. The role of the educator or ‘boundary worker’ shifted from a few, leading shop-stewards to many, ordinary members of the union whose experiences crossed significant time boundaries.

In the assessment meeting at the end of the first week of the strike, union activists drew strongly on ‘lessons from the past’ to generate strategic understandings of this strike. The importance of drawing on historical experience to inform mass action was explicitly referred to in some of my interviews with full-time shop-stewards. For example, one of the FTSS argued that isiXhosa-speaking workers draw on a lengthy historical tradition of collective resistance:

... we’ve grown up in the history of that now.... we have been growing up suffering.... Why should we be afraid of fighting for our own rights because after suffering there is something that is going to come if we stand together.... People... feel in their heart that now, no, no, no, I’m not striking for myself but I am striking for my family (FTTS Interview 4).

Historical experience was also drawn upon in formulating the themes and slogans that were fore-grounded in this strike:

...you know, we had this poster: “To Hell, It’s War!” It’s not the first time that poster came out, you know, it’s the second time that poster came out. And not only the poster, a circular or pamphlet that came out during the ’95 strike (where) we said “To Hell it’s War... (FTSS Interview 3).

Historical experience was also drawn on in the processes of critical reflection-in-action to emphasise discontinuities in workers’ experiences over time, for example, the weakening of the ‘workers movement’ (“...now that he’s (Mandela) out (of jail) you haven’t got that struggle any more...”) and the deterioration of their working conditions. According to one of the Cleansing depot workers:

... they’re taking our jobs away. In the old era, there was a job for each and every person, you can say....I could take out my jacket and go to another job. But now....you must think twice or three times....

‘History’ thus played a crucial role in allowing workers to contextualise their experiences in a comparative way, to construct meaning around the collective

action they engaged in during the strike, to inform strategic choices and to 'imagine' alternatives.

Historical experience was also seen as acting as a potential 'barrier' to learning. For example, some union leaders argued that the dominant historical tradition of short but intense forms of protest in SAMWU made it relatively difficult to prepare members for a long, sustained, three-week strike (PEO, ILRIG debate). Trade unionists learnt that although "previous strikes built our experience" the learning of lessons from history is never enough to ensure a successful strike. Each strike presents new challenges: "... a strike can't be planned clinically.... A strike has a life of itself... (FTSS, ILRIG debate).

Learning about power

Strikes are fundamentally about power relations. As one of the FTSS said in an interview:

... sometimes our workers look out for the strike because.... I think it all revolves around the balance of power, and they're familiar with this thing of the balance of power (FTSS Interview 3).

Instances of mass action like the strike are therefore central to union members learning about, and articulating their understanding of power.

Through their experiences of the strike, there were lessons for union members in terms of strike strategy and tactics: for example, the need for a strike fund; the need to counter more effectively the divisive tactics of management; the need to have clarity on who are 'essential services' workers and who not; the need to clarify internal roles and responsibilities; and the need to build community support in a sustained way (PEO, in ILRIG debate). Participants learnt not only practical, organisational and strategic lessons but also gained deeper understanding of a more general kind; as one experienced shop-steward (also a national office-bearer of the union) argued:

The strike is very educational, it's where workers start learning about the economy – for example: why are we going on strike. It is also educational for the leadership (FGI 6).

In the strike, workers learnt about how economic power functions, and about how political power operates to protect those with economic power ("... they try to

protect them and let us get hurt...” – Cleansing worker). Following Vygotsky’s notion that conceptual thought originates in practical interaction with the world (Young, 2002: 44 – 45), the strike shows that workers’ experiences constructed knowledge which is not only particular but also general and abstract.

A thirst for new knowledge

In Chapter 5, it was noted in considering the full-time shop-steward narratives that their growing involvement in the union created an increased thirst for knowledge. Similarly, the strike raised important organisational, strategic and political questions, stimulating a search for answers to these questions, and awakening in workers a desire to know more about how society functions, and a broader interest in gaining more understanding about politics, history and the economy. In discussing their learning from the strike, shop-stewards in some of the focus group interviews made comments which echoed those quoted in the previous chapter about how historically “the generation pre-1994 were more curious because they were in a crisis”, and they emphasised their need for more education around politics, history and the global economy:

We need to start giving our members political education... [Yes!] People don’t understand how the politics work... (FGI 3)

Many shop-stewards don’t know about the labour movement. We need to know what’s happening with globalisation etcetera. Shop-stewards who attend workshops need to inform us.... (FGI 6)

Participation in collective action also acted to test and validate knowledge-in-use. For example, prior to the strike an analysis of the ‘balance of forces’ – the relative strength of workers as opposed to employers – was made, but it remained hypothetical until tested out in practice. Following the strike, the trade union’s leadership made attempts (via a questionnaire survey, but also through detailed oral reports) to gain a better – and more critical – understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation.

Imagining alternatives

Echoing Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘everyday’ being a source of ‘utopian impulse’ (in Gardiner, 2000: 17), the strike presented an opportunity not only for a critique of the current order, but also served to construct alternatives and articulate a vision of ‘what might be possible’. This ‘utopian’ element was part of the

organisational learning that took place and may be seen in workers' critiques of their own union, and in the memories of the past that the strike evoked.

For example, in my interview with the Cleansing workers, they seemed at times to engage in a form of 'collective re-imagining' of their experiences during the strike which asserted the importance of the collective. They insisted that they had participated in a strike ballot, even though on this occasion, the union had decided not to hold a strike ballot. When asked whether this had been the first time they'd been on strike, they answered:

W1: No!... no!... every year, every year!

W2: Sometimes it's twice....(a year) And Wynberg is the first depot (to go on strike) – they call Wynberg the “dirty dogs”...

W3: What he's trying to say is that the union is getting their full support (for every strike) ... that's what he wants to say... getting their full support....

Whether or not these memories were accurate may be an important issue for the union. However, for the purposes of my argument here, what is important is the fact that as versions of history, they allow us to “recognise the interests of the tellers, and the dreams and desires beneath them” (Portelli, 1991: 2). In ‘remembering’ earlier forms of this community of practice, workers were expressing their longing to re-create what seemed like a better time in their organisation, and implicitly putting forward a vision of an alternative community of practice: a union that would be responsive to its members, listen to their problems, supply workers with sufficient information to allow them to shape decisions, respect and show appreciation to workers for the sacrifices they make for the collective good, support them when they were on strike, and successfully protect them against exploitation and abuse by the employer. This process of ‘imagining alternatives’ was part of a process of critical evaluation of the functioning of this community of practice.

The strike as an evaluative moment of union pedagogy

In Chapter 5 it was argued that the key aim of union's planned education programmes is to build the collective, working class identity of its shop-steward leadership, and to develop the roles, values, principles and skills required of its worker leaders. The union does not have any established mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of its education programmes: worker leaders are

expected to 'prove' their competence in their actions to defend and provide leadership to union members.

My argument is that the strike acted as a significant evaluative moment of the union's pedagogy, functioning to indicate whether the building of collective identity, and related development of roles and skills – the core aims of the union's planned education programme – had been successfully achieved or not. There were many workers who supported the strike, thus enacting their trade unionist and working class identity. However, many did not support the strike and some shop-stewards failed to exercise the roles, skills and moral leadership they were supposed to have acquired through their shop-steward training and mentoring on-the-job.

The strike acted as a 'moment of evaluation' at a further level, which is deeply implicated in the issue of power relations. The strike put internal power relations within the union under the spotlight: it was a test of whether the union as an organisation was able to live up to its own values and principles of collective democracy and worker control, and whether it was able to successfully deliver gains to its membership.

The strike was an opportunity for ordinary workers to reflect critically on the quality of their leaders and what they wanted from their union leadership. It is interesting to note that shop-steward elections after the strike¹²⁴ brought a new layer of shop-floor leadership to the fore. As one FTSS explained:

.... so in my own understanding ... sometimes the leadership is less prepared than the workers themselves. And a lot of times the leadership is more scared than the workers ... I mean for me an indication ... was that a lot of shop-stewards did not come out on strike. And a lot of their members came out on strike. And I think we can see the fruits of that especially with our new elections this year... that they're (workers are) not wanting those shop-stewards and a lot of the shop-stewards didn't come back ... into positions again. And a lot of those militant members that led the strike – or led the members in the strike – those are the guys that actually came in ... (FTSS Interview 3).

The strike was also an occasion for workers to reflect critically on the democratic processes of the union. For example, one full-time shop-steward felt that the union

¹²⁴ In the 2003 shop-steward elections.

had committed workers to agreements regarding essential services in which workers had no say, and which seriously hindered the strike:

... we were angered with the people who had made those agreements, we were angry!” This was a weakness within the branch: We allow people to go and negotiate the agreements, but we never took stock of what they negotiated... and we also never took stock of: were members taken along in this process? (FTSS Interview 1)

Another full-time shop-steward admitted that communication was ‘not what it should have been’:

...we were under the impression that the shop-stewards who had been drawn in had received a mandate from their members, until we learnt through the course of the strike that members were not aware of the agreement... Communication is a key area ... when you mobilise ... it does require long engagement, communication with members throughout the course of the year (FTSS Interview 2).

The union failed one group of workers during the strike. The Cleansing depot workers felt bitter that in the absence of a strike fund, the union had somehow not fulfilled its side of the contract. This was reflected in the words of the worker who vowed that “This is my last strike, they won’t get me to strike again, because they don’t keep their word....” It was unclear to me how representative the critical opinions of the Cleansing depot workers regarding their union were; my research did not pick up the same depth of anger and dissatisfaction towards the union in any other forums observed, nor in the interviews conducted. However, whether representative or not, what the dissatisfaction of the Cleansing depot workers illustrates is that for these workers, the strike was (amongst other important things) a moment of critical evaluation of the performance of their leadership, and a time to put forward radical proposals for changes which they felt were needed in this community of practice. The strike’s ‘transformative’ orientation was significant not only in relation to the broader, societal power relations, but also to power relations within the trade union community of practice.

The strike as ‘public education’

The sections that follow consider the strike’s second pedagogic dimension: its counter-hegemonic, ‘public education’ role. They will analyse the strike as an event involving the communication of a ‘pedagogic message’ to employers, the

state and the broader community; in terms of who plays educator and learner roles; what resources are drawn upon to mediate the public messages of the strike; what forms of knowledge are transmitted; and what social purposes the strike (as pedagogy) ultimately serves.

A question that needs to be posed at the outset is: can the strike's impact on those outside of the union legitimately be viewed as an instance of 'pedagogy'? Could it not better be viewed as 'propaganda', given that it involves highly politically-charged forms of communication and propagates a very particular view of the world? My argument here – that the strike should be viewed as an instance of pedagogy – is based on the premise that all education is normative and framed by a particular set of values. The fact that the strike's broader impact is propagandistic does not preclude it being an instance of pedagogy; it simply makes the strike a very strongly and explicitly normative form of pedagogy.

There is, however, a distinction between 'persuasion' and 'force'. Gramsci viewed "every relationship of 'hegemony' (as) necessarily a pedagogical relationship" (quoted in Entwistle, 1979: 12). He distinguished between the state's domination by force and hegemony, arguing that hegemony is a relation "of consent by means of political and ideological leadership" (Simon, 1982: 21). Likewise, counter-hegemony is primarily a struggle for ideological and political leadership. Gramsci held that "... resort to violence by a subaltern class is not a sufficient condition for establishing its own hegemony; this requires a profound change in mass consciousness" (Entwistle, 1979: 13). Following Gramsci's notion of hegemony and counter-hegemony, my analysis distinguishes between 'symbolic persuasion' and 'forcible persuasion' as two different dimensions of the strike.

Educator and learner roles: workers as collective educators

Chapters 4 and 5 argued that the division of labour between educators and learners is distinct (although fluid) in union education events, and considerably weaker in union meetings where workers constantly step in and out of these respective roles. During the strike however, the boundary between educators and learners shifts markedly: ordinary workers play a collective, educational role, and

their 'learners' are management, other workers and the general public outside of the union.

It was noted earlier that municipal workers perceive the work they do, and the value of that work, as remaining invisible to society (FTSS Interview 3). The strike, however, was an occasion when workers could make themselves noticed by withdrawing their labour. The withdrawal of their labour was aimed at preventing municipalities from going about their normal work, and thereby pressuring employers back to the negotiating table; it also had symbolic or expressive significance. It allowed workers to make their voices heard, and to make themselves visible through their 'absence'.

Through their collective action (marches, pickets, occupations of offices), workers are both communicating and constructing their collective identity, their view of the world, and their power. Workers on strike thus play a collective educator role; their experiences constitute the 'curriculum'; and for a while, 'the world' becomes their classroom.

Tools of mediation: from orality to visual spectacle

Embedded in the actions of those that took part in the strike were many of the same tools of mediation that were visible in workshops and meetings. Speeches and text played an important role in taking the message 'outwards'. In addition to the traditional use of placards and pamphlets, the union also made significant use of the mass media such as radio and television to project its message to the general public. However, the creative use of language that was so strongly foregrounded in workshops and meetings was far more back-grounded in the strike, while the use of 'embodied' and 'impassioned' forms of 'performance' came further to the fore during the strike.

Mass action as symbol

The strike illustrates perhaps most clearly what Eyerman and Jamison have described as the symbolic, or expressive significance of social movements (1991: 48). The mass action was a statement of workers' demands – and a symbol of their power – communicated towards management. One of the full-time shop-stewards noted in her interview that this was the first time they'd been on strike

“since the old Cape Town strike” and as a result, there was “this urge” to make it a success:

It was not only SAMWU comrades’ eyes on this.... The employer was watching the strike very closely and they wanted to see (how strong we were – LC) ... That was always on your mind, that ... workers must be mobilised, they must come out on strike, it must be a success (FTSS Interview 1).

The strikers’ mass action carried a message not only to the employer, but to all those – including other workers – who were spectators of the event. In public statements to the media, the union’s leadership projected the strike as a protest against low wages of workers as well as the huge inequality in the wage structure of the public service more generally. It argued that inequality and poverty are linked to the government’s neo-liberal economic policies, including privatisation, and the emergence of a new, black ‘elite’. The message transmitted to the general public was that the problems facing local government workers are inextricably bound up with those experienced by poor communities more generally (and, to some extent, middle class communities facing hikes in their rates and taxes, and cuts in their services), and that they needed to join hands in opposition to local government.

The strike as ‘carnival’

Melucci has described social movements as a kind of ‘social dramaturgy’ where “movements no longer operate as characters but as signs” (1988: 249). The social drama of the strike was evident in its display of worker power, and the myriad symbolic features visible on the march in the form of posters, banners and flags, use of the (moving) ‘stage’, and the use of colours, signs, songs, and dance. These all highlight the carnivalesque qualities of the strike in the Bakhtinian sense (Bakhtin, 1965/1994). The celebratory spirit of the march (its sardonic humour, use of musical instruments and dress reminiscent of the annual Cape carnival, open drinking, singing and toyi-toying) combined with the deadly seriousness of the workers’ conflict with the Council and the threatened and real incidents of violence, demonstrate its ambivalent and subversive character.

The widespread ‘trashing’ by some of the strikers aroused much public indignation. The up-ending of garbage bags and bins were deliberate acts of defiance with a symbolic aim: the union’s National Education Officer commented

that this was an historic tactic of garbage workers who went on strike: “Why should they wait for two weeks for rubbish to become a real problem...?” (Personal communication, 11 July 2002). These acts were intentionally pedagogic in that they aimed to communicate – not only literally but also metaphorically – the enactment of a world ‘turned upside down’ (Gardiner, 2000: 61). These actions can be seen not only as destructive, but also as constructing the possibility of a world where the work of cleansing workers would be more visible, and where the value of their work would be appreciated by society.

The role of ‘anger’ in the strike: ‘Ek sal vir jou wys!’ (I’ll show you!)

The key messages of the strike were also communicated through the display of intense emotions rooted in the experiences that led workers to embark upon the strike. The messages on the posters carried by workers on the march were highly emotive, while the speeches delivered both expressed and appealed to emotion.

‘Anger’ was a consistent emotional theme in my interviews with full-time shop-stewards when they reflected on the strike. One full-time shop-steward said that members:

are very angry on how they were treated by the employer, and coming out on strike is the one area where members can show their anger towards the employer. So I think it (the strike – LC) was the realisation of their anger – that they felt over a couple of years.... (FTSS Interview 1)

In another interview, the full-time shop-steward responsible for the Cleansing depot where workers were interviewed around their experiences of the strike emphasised the anger and combativity of this group of strikers: “They prepare for war....” and they “provoke no end, they provoke no end!.... Since ’91, so they look out for the strike. And they don’t like a passive strike, you know” (Interview 2). He argued that this combativity arose out of a long-standing, ‘festering’ anger which was linked to the location of the municipal worker in the broader racialised and gendered division of labour:

FTSS: I know the heartbeat of the municipal worker, they go all out, and then don’t even care if they’re being hurt! I mean I’ve seen it with my own eyes, you know, I’ve experienced it, so, ya

Interviewer: Why do you think that is?

FTSS: Anger... frustration.... The one thing, I think it’s the anger towards the employer, but I think the municipal worker also brings a whole lot of

baggage along the way, frustration with community, the menial jobs which they're doing, like the 'dirt cart boy' - people called things. So like, they're refuse workers, they're sanitation workers, you know, and people look down on them and the community looks down on them, so....

(You) must also bear in mind that the municipal workers were one of the most lowly-paid workers in the country, with the least benefits.... So there's a whole lot of them that have spent years in the council, and this is actually an opportunity to express themselves and ... you know, they have this view towards management: 'ek sal vir jou wys! (I'll show you!) You must also bear in mind that a lot of them are oppressed in the workplace... so, if those workers get out, and they have an opportunity to get to the management, you know, some serious stuff can happen there. So I'm saying there's baggage that they bring, besides living in your Manenburgs, your Bonteheuwels¹²⁵, you know where it is... well you know... it's rough areas ... (FTSS Interview 3).

Workers, through their actions, seemed to be saying to management and the community: "We will show you" that we will no longer be treated with the indignity of 'dirt cart boys'. Workers' experiences over the years – their frustration over their lack of advancement, their experiences of the ongoing intensification of work and deteriorating conditions, and their anger that their employers (local government councillors whom they had elected) were becoming part of a new, black elite – were condensed into the aggression of the march, the attacks on police and strike-breakers, and their 'trashing' of the streets.

There were times during the strike when workers' anger and combativeness found expression in a form linked to the historical tradition of Cape Flats gangsterism. Stone (2002), in a study on the use of dialect in Cape Town's coloured, working class communities, identifies four common identities, each corresponding to a particular language code in use on the Cape Flats¹²⁶. I found his typologies of 'disreputable' and 'delinquent' (the latter most strongly associated with Cape Flats gangsterism) suggestive because it seemed to me that both these identities surfaced in the course of workers' actions during the strike, and there seemed to be somewhat of a shift from the 'disreputable' to the 'delinquent' during the

¹²⁵ Manenburg and Bonteheuwel are working class neighbourhoods on the Cape Flats, and notorious for their gang violence.

¹²⁶ 'Respectability' – sought after by the middle class or aspirant middle class – is defined in opposition to, firstly, 'disreputability' – common amongst adolescent and young adult males, and proposing a 'don't care' attitude of "utter imperviousness to all consequences of its enactment" (Stone, 2002: 388). 'Respectability' is also defined in opposition to 'delinquency' – the violent pursuit of disorder, and the identity most strongly associated with 'Cape Flats' gangsterism.

course of the strike. There were frequent attempts by local union leadership to curb workers' more 'disreputable' forms of combativeness, for example, when leaders on the march appealed to workers to "leave the cops alone" and "stop throwing missiles", or when unionists meeting on the third day of the strike sought ways to deal with the 'deviant' behaviour of some shop-steward leaders.

Forms of knowledge: 'knowing in action'

Scribner (1997: 309) argues that activities always involve a synthesis of mental and behavioural, but that the two can be separated analytically into moments when one or the other predominates. While 'knowledge' predominated over 'action' in union workshops, and the two were equally fore-grounded in union meetings (where 'knowledge' was used to plan 'action'), in the strike it was 'action' that predominated, with 'knowledge' being embedded in that action.

In the strike it is possible to see knowledge in action, as well as knowledge as action. The 'performativity' of workers' mass action was also evident in the Tygerberg meeting where workers, by disrupting a management workshop, sought to communicate their rejection of managements' unilateral approach to restructuring. Workers' experiential knowledge and their anger over poor wages, the privatisation and outsourcing of municipal services, workers' "redeployment and unemployment" and the freezing of posts (Cleansing Workers' interview), expressed itself in the embodied symbolism of collective action which communicated outwards a critique of the contradictory logic of post-apartheid public policy.

Although the strike was the most 'everyday' of the knowledge settings observed in the union, it is important not to conflate 'setting' with 'form of knowledge'. Although much knowledge drawn on in the strike was action-oriented, practical and deeply contextualised, *at the same time* it was also abstract, theoretical and general. During the strike, the 'language'd discourse of union workshops and meetings gave way to the more universal 'language of the body', a form which was concrete as well as very abstract, specific to immediate context as well as highly generalised. For example, the messages conveyed by the slogans on placards during the march were deeply contextualised in the experiences of the strikers, but also operated at a high level of generality and abstraction, making

links between the state's economic policies, the emergence of a new, black elite, poverty, and 'class war':

Phantsi managers and councillors eating themselves fat while the workers starve!
Down with Gear, Starvation wages
To Hell! It's War!
Privatisation equals Retrenchments equals Poverty

The union's strike pamphlet made links between workers' wages, the government's macro-economic policy, the 'apartheid wage gap', and privatisation, while the speeches on the march linked workers' struggles with class analysis, history and the goal of socialism. This mass action seemed to be a time of 'theorising the world' at a very broad level.

In the strike, there was a tenuous line between symbolic persuasion on the one hand, and forcible persuasion on the other. Many of the strikers' actions – their marches, singing, toyi-toying, pickets, tipping of garbage bins – were arguably examples of symbolic persuasion, but also contained elements of 'force'. At times, the slippage between 'symbolic persuasion' and 'forcible persuasion' became more marked; this was evident for example in the Tygerberg meeting where workers reported how they had occupied council offices, sabotaged vehicles and "pelted management with dirt". This crossing of boundaries between 'symbolic' and 'forcible' persuasion seems inevitable in a context where the struggle for hegemony is not only symbolic but also embodied and material.

Social purpose of the strike: challenging societal power relations?

It was argued earlier that the strike constituted an evaluative moment of union pedagogy. It was a test of the union's ability to achieve its main social purpose as an organisation: to challenge the power of the employer to dictate the rules and conditions under which workers work, and as a consequence, the rules and conditions under which they, their families and their community live.

In many ways, the strike acted to challenge power relations between workers and their employers (local councils). It did so not only materially, through workers withdrawing their labour, but also symbolically, through questioning hegemonic assumptions about the progress achieved in South Africa's post apartheid, 'non-

racial' democracy. The strike was not only about wages, but also about poor communities' socio-economic rights to housing, employment and basic services. The public message of the strike not only challenged the unequal wage structure within the municipal sector; it also critiqued the unequal distribution of wealth more broadly, as well as the emergence of a new, upwardly-mobile, black elite, and hence the ideology of 'black economic empowerment' promoted by government. When I proposed to the Cleansing workers that 'the people' had voted municipal councillors into power, and that they should therefore be regarded as having popular support, one worker responded:

They just steal our money. They promise a better life... but things get harder and harder.... And they have stacks of money The president has this huge house with huge trees.... [laughter; Ya!]

A participant in one of the focus group interviews had this to say:

We call our councillors 'amabhulu' ('boers' or whites) – even though they are black!.... (FGI 1)

It was noted earlier that the strike enjoyed far greater support amongst workers who are regarded as 'unskilled labourers' than amongst 'white-collar' workers. The strike was an occasion when the general membership of the union who had been represented by their shop-stewards in workshops and meetings, were directly active and visible. Through their active presence in the strike, these workers demanded greater recognition and respect for their so-called 'unskilled' labour. Their concerns were given a voice in one of the speeches at the march on the first day of the strike:

There are many workers who do the dirty work that those people take for granted. They never ask us what we need... they will say that essential services workers can't strike. If they are so essential, then why ... (don't they get paid more?) [Cheers]. Why do you kick them out of their home? (Union General Secretary; the march)

The strike also called into question other elements of hegemonic discourse. When shop-stewards at a meeting on the 9th day of the strike decided to march even though this had been declared illegal, they challenged the moral authority of the law to rule fairly and impartially between workers and employer. Through their attacks on police, the city manager and council property, workers challenged the

norms of social behaviour, as well as the state's monopoly of coercive means of power.

Elements of 'carnival' have already been identified in the strike. Bakhtin argues that carnival celebrates "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and the established order", and is the "utopian ideal and the realistic merged" (Bakhtin, 1965/1994: 198–199). The strike was a collective expression of discontent, and the knowledge communicated through it comprised a critique of the current order. The strike also acted as a vehicle for unionised workers to put forward their common worldviews and assumptions, to "specify the contours of the desirable" (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991: 82), imagine alternatives and articulate a vision of 'what might be possible'. The 'utopian impulse' of the workers' movement was more visible in the strike than in any other union setting observed. It was visible in the posters which demanded a Living Wage, and audible in the speeches on the march that spoke of a 'united working class', and a 'socialist future'. This vision had found some expression in some of the meetings or workshops which I observed (see for example the Depot-level meetings in Chapter 6), but it was strongly expressed – as well as 'enacted' in small ways – during the strike. For example, this 'vision of the future' was visible in instances where workers struggled to find a shared identity that would embrace their diversity, or when workers shared the little they had: "I saw men coming here in the morning without food, without food, then I shared my pakkie...." (Cleansing workers' interview); it was also visible in the words of the workers who said that they supported the strike "Because there's a future for all of us" (Cleansing workers interview).

However, much like in the other two settings researched in this union, the strike not only challenged but also reflected societal power relations. Perhaps more so than either workshops or meetings, the strike illustrated the tension that exists between the trade union movement's desire for inclusion within the modern, industrial state on the one hand, and its desire to transform that state on the other. For example, although there were moments when the power of the law to determine strikers' actions was challenged, on the whole the union leadership was deeply committed to conducting the strike within the letter of the law. This concern may have been a tactic of the union to avoid alienating public opinion. It

may also be the case that this indicates the degree to which trade unions have been brought into the hegemonic discourse of post-apartheid South Africa. However, 'respect for the law' was also an acknowledgement of – and a pragmatic accommodation to – the uneven power relations that exist between workers and employers, and the protection that employers enjoy from the police and the state. As workers in the Cleansing depot noted:

... they've got bullets, guns, batons And our strikers go there with bare hands....
...With bare hands. And empty stomach.

The strike was a powerful identity-construction exercise. However, it has also been noted that support for the strike in the Cape Town area was uneven, and there is evidence that the strike surfaced different ideological and identity positions amongst union members. One full-time shop-steward felt that there was less 'passion' in this strike than in previous strikes:

People were more ... more committed in the past to strike, even though (they had) no food in the house then, compared with now where people are hesitant, or think twice before they go on strike... there's that change of mindset... So it's this that makes one think – ponder – why was the strike that time so dynamic and this time so lackadaisical? These Cape Town people, I always ask them: Where is the old SAMWU? And they tell me, no, that SAMWU is still here, it's just that we must act, and keep that spirit we had in the past (FTSS Interview 1).

She grappled to make sense of this 'weakening of commitment', concluding that the ideology of working class solidarity was being rapidly eroded by an alternative ideology of competitive individualism:

It's definitely the result of the broader context out there. It's how people's value systems have changed since '94 and up to now. ... along the line that collectiveness disappeared, and ... it's not only in the union, it's also in communities.... We used to have that culture of collectivity and that has disappeared along the line. People become mean individualists... shop-stewards even have become more individualistic in their approach to their functions... (FTSS Interview 1).

Another full-time shop-steward reflected on how the situation of cleansing workers who were at the heart of the branch's militant protest actions in the late 1980s and early 1990s, had changed over the first decade of democracy as a result of privatisation, the casualisation of jobs, the retrenchment of some workers and

the upward mobility of others. She argued that “there’s a different breed, very few of the old cleansing people is left Lots of them took their pension... and were never replaced”. For the workers who were left: “Lot of overtime ... they started building life-styles on overtime...”. She accused these workers of becoming “spoilt” and thinking that “they’re a cut above everybody else”.

It was emphasised on numerous occasions how the problem of ‘debt’ impacted on workers’ ability to sustain the strike (Tygerberg meeting, ILRIG debate, FTSS interviews 1 and 2). This debt was not simply an outcome of workers’ poor wages, but had been aggravated by the sale of micro-loans to members on the part of some shop-stewards and union officials. They did so against union policy and at considerable benefit to themselves, and they both represented and promoted an aspiration amongst many workers to be individually upwardly mobile¹²⁷.

The strike therefore acted to test the union’s ability to challenge broader societal relations of power, and revealed the organisation’s contradictory location in terms of seeking on the one hand to transform capitalist society, and on the other, seeking for its members greater inclusion into a democratic South Africa where ‘non-racialism’ has increasingly come to mean competitive upward mobility for a successful few. The strike also surfaced different ideological and identity positions amongst union members – differences that seemed not to have been successfully resolved by the union’s planned education programmes.

Brief review of key pedagogic features of the strike

This chapter has argued that the strike may be seen as a form of pedagogy in two different respects: firstly, as a form of ‘organisational learning’; and secondly, as a form of ‘public education’.

In terms of the first, the strike engendered a special community of practice and through this, a form of organisational learning where union members learnt through their participation in collective action and critical reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983). Workers not only learnt about the strategy and tactics of ‘struggle’, where learning was characterised by joint problem-solving and “socially

¹²⁷ After the strike, the union pursued a series of corruption charges against those who had sold micro-loans to members, and numerous officials and leaders were suspended or dismissed.

experimental activity” (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991: 82), but also learnt about the nature of political and economic power.

The strike most clearly illustrated the Situated Learning theorists’ notions of learning as ‘doing’ and ‘knowing in action’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Workers’ own experience, and their historical experience in particular, was both a source of knowledge and criteria to test and validate knowledge in use. The strike also awakened amongst its participants a thirst for new knowledge and for a better understanding of society, history, and their own organisation.

The strike acted as a key evaluative moment of union pedagogy, in terms of its goals of building workers’ class identity and promoting solidarity. The strike revealed different ideological and identity positions amongst its members that did not seem to have been successfully resolved by the union’s planned education programmes, nor by the pedagogic processes happening in meetings, nor by the strike itself. This illustrates the danger of ‘essentialist’ notions of ‘working class experience’, and the importance of problematising the concept of ‘experience’ (see Brah and Hoy, 1989; Usher, 1992; Michelson, 1998 and others in Chapter 2). The strike served to stimulate critical self-reflection on the role of leadership, and put to the test the union’s commitment to workers’ control and democracy, thus serving as an occasion when members could contest the rules on which this community of practice operates.

It was in the context of looking at the strike as a form of ‘public education’ that Bakhtin’s concepts proved most rich and generative. Following Sitas (1990), the strike’s public education role may be seen as a combination of the ‘defiant mode’ (ritually demonstrating defiance and weaving together solidarities) and the ‘carnavalesque mode’. As ‘carnival’, the strike was subversive in character and a form of resistance to the ‘official’ and ‘administered’ world (Gardiner, 2000: 15); it enacted a world ‘turned upside down’ (Gardiner, 2000: 68) while also manifesting the desire for a better world. In ‘defiant’ and ‘carnavalesque’ modes of the strike, workers played the role of ‘collective educator’.

As noted in Chapter 2, Bakhtin argued that the human body is a focal point and foundation of resistance (in Gardiner, 2000: 16). In looking at the strike’s ‘public education’ role, a decisive shift from the languaged discourse of workshops and

meetings towards 'embodied symbolism' can be seen, where collective action was not only instrumental but also symbolic in nature, functioning to mediate the workers' message to the outside world. Depth of emotion – and feelings of anger in particular – also played a key mediational role, enabling the translation of experiential knowledge into collective action.

The knowledge embodied in the strike's collective action was both concrete and abstract, deeply contextualised as well as aimed at making very general statements about the world, thus bringing together the 'sacred' and the 'profane'. This raises questions about the static boundaries between different forms of knowledge set up by dualist epistemologies.

The strike was not only a critique of the current order but also articulated the future possibility of a different kind of society, thus demonstrating the 'utopian impulse' (Gardiner, 2000: 17) of the workers' movement. However, the pedagogic function of the strike was ultimately ambivalent and contradictory. The strike also put to the test the union's ability to challenge dominant, societal power relations and revealed (like other instances of union 'pedagogy') the tension between the trade union's commitment to transform capitalist society on the one hand, and its search for inclusion and incorporation into a capitalist, democratic South Africa on the other.

CHAPTER 7:

THEORISING EDUCATION, LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE TRADE UNION CONTEXT

This study aimed to document and analyse processes of learning, and forms of pedagogy and knowledge, within the trade union organisational context; establish how these vary across sites in the organisation; and assess how shifts in the social role of the trade union movement have impacted upon its pedagogy. It also sought to contribute to the development of a conceptual framework that might allow learning, pedagogy and knowledge in the informal or non-formal, collective, social-action context of the trade union to be compared with those in more mainstream educational institutions.

The previous three chapters have each presented a descriptive and interpretive account of learning, pedagogy and knowledge within one of three settings: the union's planned education programmes; the day-to-day processes of organisational involvement within the union with a specific focus on meetings; and the processes of a national strike in which members of this union branch participated. My findings were analysed in each chapter following the broad lines of enquiry laid out in Chapter 3, namely: forms of pedagogy, the relationship between educators and learners, symbolic tools of mediation, forms and uses of knowledge, and the social purpose of trade union pedagogy. Each chapter presented an emerging analysis, drawing selectively on conceptual resources from the four main theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 2.

This chapter addresses the questions: what are the key features of learning, pedagogy and knowledge in the union context, and what is the broader social and theoretical significance of these features? There are arguably five distinct – though not necessarily unique – and interrelated features of learning, pedagogy and knowledge in the trade union context:

1. A 'mixed pedagogic pallet' of invisible, competence pedagogy and visible, performance pedagogy, with visible, performance pedagogy predominating;

2. A 'widely dispersed' educator role, with workers playing the role of 'invisible pedagogues';
3. The centrality of symbolic tools of mediation embedded in black, working class history and culture, and of oral-performativity in particular;
4. The predominance of hybrid forms of knowledge and dialectical 'weaving together' of different forms of knowledge; and
5. The ambivalent combination of resistance, transformative vision, and accommodation in the social purpose of union pedagogy.

In exploring these features, an argument will be developed as to how they 'work together' as a bounded system (Gray, 2003: 68) and what their broader educational significance might be. The discussion will return to the theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 2, and engage critically and 'reconstructively' (Burawoy, 1998) with them. An argument will be offered as to how these theories might be extended or elaborated to take account of the distinct nature of learning, pedagogy and knowledge in a non-formal/informal, collective and social-action oriented context such as the trade union.

Forms of pedagogy: a mixed 'pedagogic pallet'¹²⁸

Union pedagogy may be described as a 'mixed pallet' (Bernstein, 1996) of visible and invisible pedagogy. Forms of invisible pedagogy included tacit learning through participation in the union as a community of practice, and learning through reflection on experience; forms of visible pedagogy involved the transmission and acquisition of knowledge through didactic methods. Although different forms of pedagogy and learning could be found in all three settings within the union, invisible pedagogy predominated during the strike and in meetings, while visible forms of pedagogy predominated in union education programmes.

¹²⁸ Bernstein (1996: 70) says that "... models and modes may give rise to what could be called a pedagogic pallet where mixes can take place. A therapeutic mode may be inserted in an economic mode, retaining its original name and resonances, while giving rise to an opposing practice...".

This section will consider each of these forms of pedagogy and learning, and put forward an argument accounting for this pedagogic 'mix'. Drawing on Bernstein's concepts, I will argue that this 'mixed pallet' has to be understood historically as the insertion of a competence mode of radical pedagogy into a traditionally more dominant, performance mode of pedagogy. It will be shown that this particular 'mix' of pedagogic models cannot be understood without problematising the notions of 'participation' and 'experience'.

A trade union community of practice: learning through guided participation

Situated Learning theory enabled a range of activities within the union to be viewed through a 'learning lens' and allowed me to ask: what forms of social activity engaged in by members of this activity system have learning as a significant outcome? By viewing the union as a community of practice or activity system (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Engeström, 2002), it was possible to see learning taking place tacitly through participation (observing and doing) and, on occasions, as a result of being 'thrown in at the deep end'. Although such learning may be unconscious, there are people and technologies that mediate learning.

In the day-to-day processes of organising and meeting, 'old-timers' model the roles and values that 'newcomers' are expected to acquire. Thus learning takes place through the processes of guided participation (Rogoff, 1984: 147) by 'old timers' who may carry out their roles both unconsciously and consciously. These processes of guided participation are aimed at apprenticing shop-stewards into their roles, and inducting them into the shared values, identities and forms of participation expected within the organisation.

In addition to people playing a key mediating role, the organisational environment itself plays an integral role in facilitating learning. As noted in Chapter 2, Scribner (1997: 329) argues that organisational environments embody 'organised, social knowledge', and in particular, historical knowledge. The black trade unions that emerged during the 1970s and 1980s have been described as "laboratories for democracy"¹²⁹ where workers drew lessons on how to organise under conditions

¹²⁹ Alec Erwin, first COSATU Education secretary, quoted in Friedman (1987: 499).

of repression. The principles and practices of participatory democracy and strategies of struggle that evolved became embodied in the physical and symbolic environment and day-to-day rituals of the trade union as an activity system. By drawing on the perspective of Activity Theory, it is therefore possible to view the historical experience of black workers in South Africa as ‘intelligence sedimented in organisation’ (Scribner, 1997: 313). Historically in my case study, as the organisational culture of SAMWU’s Cape Town branch changed over time, it incorporated the principles and practices of worker control, democracy, accountability to the collective, and building links with communities (traditions of its other branches and sister unions). As members participate in the organisation today, they learn from and appropriate the knowledge of previous generations of workers in SAMWU and in other organisations.

Chapter 6 showed that ‘collective doing’ also played a key role in mediating learning in the mass action of the strike, and here, the Situated Learning theorists’ notions of learning as ‘doing’ and ‘knowing in action’ are most clearly illustrated. The strike may be viewed as a unique but transient community of practice in which union members – through their participation in collective action – learn about the strategy and tactics of ‘struggle’, while at the same time communicating their needs, problems and vision of the future not only to employers, but also to other workers and sectors of the community.

In viewing the trade union as a community of practice, it is to be expected that greater levels of participation should facilitate greater opportunities for learning. Working within a different conceptual schema, Bernstein makes a similar point by arguing that ‘everyday’ discourses are acquired as a result of their functionality, and “in face-to-face relations with affective loading” (Bernstein, 1999: 161). In other words, the circulation of ‘everyday’ forms of knowledge depends largely on social contact. The stronger the social interrelationships and social solidarity, “the greater social potential for the circulation of strategies, of procedures and their ‘exchange’” (Bernstein, 1999: 160). Alternatively in Bakhtin’s terms, the potential of the trade union as a community of practice to mediate learning depends on multi-voiced interaction between its members within its various settings. Clearly, the rules of practice of the trade union which prioritise social interaction and solidarity between social equals create the *potential* for widespread participation

and multi-voiced interaction. However the multi-voicedness of settings within the union cannot be assumed.

Earlier chapters showed that the nature of participation varied across different union settings. Overall, meetings – where there is extensive communication *between* participants – are more multi-voiced than union education programmes, and there is greater space for multiple and contested meanings. However there are also constraints on participation in meetings arising from problems in the internal democratic functioning of the union which restricts the free flow of information, the failure to fully address the language and literacy needs of members, and reliance on univocal forms of text for reporting purposes. Participation is also limited by the unequal power relations between participants derived from different levels of (formal) education, gender inequalities and the hierarchical division of labour in the workplace. Furthermore, the institutionalised practice of meeting procedure is hierarchical in itself, where the chairperson wields considerable power over what may be discussed (as seen in one meeting where the chair excluded discussion on one document), and where those delivering reports (boundary workers) enjoy considerable influence by being in possession of key information. All these factors promote greater participation by some, and the more limited participation or exclusion of others. Participation by the widest numbers of union members occurred during the strike, suggesting that this form of mass action holds a great potential for learning.

As noted in Chapter 2, the Situated Learning theorists – although acknowledging interactional conflict within a community of practice – downplay questions of power relations in communities of practice, particularly those that reflect and reproduce broader structural relations of power. My findings suggest that the notion of ‘participation’ needs to be problematised because the nature and degree of participation may have a significant effect on who learns, who teaches, whose ‘voice’ (in social terms) constructs the pedagogic message in a community of practice, and whether pedagogy ‘conserves and protects’ or ‘critically challenges’ (Fenwick, 2003) dominant social power relations.

Learning from critical reflection on experience?

The findings presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 suggest that in addition to tacit learning through participation, the movement of ‘newcomers’ from the ‘periphery’ to the ‘centre’ of this community of practice is also facilitated by deliberate pedagogic interventions. This section focuses on the ‘invisible’ pedagogy of facilitating learning through reflection on and recontextualisation of experience.

In union meetings (including those that took place during the strike) workers’ experiences are most often drawn on inductively, typical of the ‘learning cycle’ proposed by the Experiential Learning theorists (Kolb, 1984; Boud, 1990; Freire 1970). Participants share, compare and interrogate their experiences, make conceptual connections between them, and move towards more generalised conclusions and action planning. In this process, some participants play a key role as ‘invisible’ pedagogues, helping others to recontextualise their experiences. This process of recontextualisation may be seen as a form of new knowledge production (Hasan, 2002); the production of new knowledge is not an end in itself, but assists workers to strategise and plan their action in a world of considerable complexity, uncertainty and change.

My findings point to the importance of viewing learning through critical reflection on experience as a collective process and not simply an individual one (as inferred by the phenomenological theorists – see Fenwick, 2001); it also points to the fact that we learn not only *from* experience, but also *in* experience (Michelson, 1998).

Chapter 4 showed that in union education programmes, ‘experience’ is used in a different way to meetings. Workers’ experiences are drawn upon in an *illustrative* way to teach new concepts and rules of practice; in other words, workers’ experience is used as a form of scaffolding (in the Vygotskian sense) to guide the learner to new understandings deemed important by the organisation. Chapter 4 concluded that a tension exists between these two pedagogic uses of ‘experience’: on the one hand, valuing workers’ experience as a source of knowledge, and on the other, using workers’ experience to ‘teach’ predetermined concepts and viewpoints. What is the source of this tension? In order to answer this, the notion of ‘experience’ needs to be problematised.

Chapter 2 discussed critics of the experiential learning theorists who argue that experience is never 'innocent' but is always located historically, socially and materially where it both reflects and reproduces social relations and social practices (for example, Brah and Hoy, 1989; Usher, 1992; Michelson, 1998). There is no one, common or 'essential' form of workers' experience. In South Africa, apartheid deliberately exploited and promoted difference and division within black, working-class communities; my findings in Chapter 5 (the depot-level meetings in particular) illustrate the tensions and divisions that continue to exist amongst workers based on structural inequalities embedded in 'race', language, gender, geography, culture and skill.

The history of the labour movement in South Africa is testimony to workers' attempts to overcome these divisions. Grossman (1994: 3) argues that at key moments in workers' struggles during the 1980s, working class collectivism dominated (even though there were other identities, complexities and contradictions operating in the situation) because workers "developed a conscious commitment in word and action to a tolerance aimed at inclusion". However, the end of apartheid and the reinsertion of South Africa into the global economy has not only exacerbated past difference, but has also led to new forms of difference: for example, between those workers who are educated enough to take advantage of new promotional opportunities and those who are not; or between those who have managed to retain permanent jobs, and those whose jobs have been outsourced, casualised or simply disappeared.

Experience is closely tied to ideology. For example, during the SAMWU strike of 2002, a significant number of workers supported the strike and reaffirmed their commitment to the union's values of building solidarity and the collective, and challenging capitalist ideology. However many other workers, by their inaction or 'silence' during the strike, expressed a different ideological position. This position may have been a continuation of historically-embedded practices within the 'old' CTMWA of a reluctance to strike, and a reluctance to openly challenge the power of the City Council. Or it may have represented a shift away from searching for collective solutions to a greater reliance on individual solutions, as illustrated in the references of one full-time shop-steward to a new 'culture of positioning', 'lifestyles based on overtime', and some workers thinking 'they're a cut above

others' (see Chapter 6). As Grossman has argued, in post-apartheid South Africa an ideology of competitive individualism has gained ground amongst all social classes, and is "experientially reinforced in daily working-class life" (Grossman, 1994:11).

The political and ideological purpose of union pedagogy – that is, of constructing a working class identity, and asserting values based on the common or shared interests of the collective – has therefore become an increasingly complex task as workers' workplace and social identities become more differentiated, and as collective values are contested from both outside and within the union. How do the union's education programmes deal with the fact that there is increasing differentiation and contradiction in black working class experience?

Those who oppose 'essentialist' notions of experience argue that educators simply need to accept that experience is "both closed and open ... complex and multi-stranded, both 'fixed' and contested" (Usher, 1992: 204), and that educators must accept difference as a basic principle and inevitable outcome of the educational process (Ellsworth, 1989). However, it is arguable that this *laissez faire* option is not an alternative for union pedagogy: its rules of practice require that it must develop solidarities amongst its members based on commonalities in workers' experiences. This point is key to understanding the particular 'pedagogic mix' that constitutes union pedagogy and in particular, the coexistence of an experience-based, learner-centred pedagogy with more didactic and directive forms of teaching.

A mixed 'pedagogic pallet': competency pedagogy inserted into performance pedagogy

Bernstein's conceptual language for describing different forms of pedagogy has proved of considerable heuristic value here. Bernstein argues that it is not unusual to find a 'pedagogic pallet' where different 'mixes' of competence and performance models and modes can take place: "... models and modes may give rise to what could be called a pedagogic pallet where mixes can take place. A therapeutic mode may be inserted in an economic mode, retaining its original name and resonances, while giving rise to an opposing practice..." (1996: 70).

It was shown in Chapter 4 that in structured education programmes, while the union espouses a commitment to a 'learner-centred' approach that foregrounds critical reflection on experience (a radical competence, invisible mode of pedagogy), in *practice* it is a complex mix of invisible, competence pedagogy and visible, performance pedagogy, with the latter predominating. In contrast to Freirian and other radical traditions of 'popular education' which emphasise that the educator should not impose his or her views on learners and should play the role of problem-poser rather than problem-solver (see Chapter 1), in this case study union pedagogy is politically and ideologically directive. Its directedness was clearly evident in the visible pedagogy of the provincial educator in the shop-steward training programme when she presented her analysis of 'classes under capitalism'. But even invisible forms of pedagogy – group activities where learners drew on their own experiences as their starting point – were *also* normative and directive, having clearly pre-determined and explicitly stated learning outcomes.

Union education programmes conscript members to a particular ideology and class-based identity. In other words, this directive pedagogy transmits particular roles and identities embedded in a powerful and explicit regulative discourse which challenges hegemonic power. This regulative discourse (Bernstein, 1996: 28) is so strong that to some extent, it *substitutes* for the instructional discourse; in other words, the union's ideology (the 'why' of its pedagogy) comprises a large part of the 'what' of its education programmes. Trade union workshops often draw in educators with specialised expertise, but subject specialism is never sufficient to construct the epistemological authority of the educator in this context (as it might do in the formal education system). The educator must *also* have an understanding of workers' needs and problems and a commitment to addressing these; that is, the educator must also have the appropriate regulative discourse.

The directive nature of union pedagogy extends beyond the union's structured education programmes to its day-to-day organising and meetings where the invisible pedagogy of mentoring and modelling is also normative. It also extends beyond the borders of the union as boundary workers go into other communities of practice not only to gather information, but also to take workers' perspectives and experiences into these forums. During the strike, workers – through their

organisation and action – communicated the moral authority and justice of their views to the broader public. This was aimed at winning wider support amongst diverse social forces, and formed part of the counter-hegemonic project of union pedagogy.

How can this directive pedagogy with its powerful regulative discourse be accounted for? One factor contributing to this is the increased difficulty of binding together diverse social forces in an era of competitive individualism and under the increased dislocation of globalisation. As the union attempts to re-assert its principles of collectivism in an environment deeply hostile to collectivism, this leads to greater directedness on its part.

Another factor which might account for the directedness of union pedagogy is that its aims are not monolithic nor straightforwardly ‘counter-hegemonic’ but diverse and contested. The research data presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 point to the fact that although not always explicit, there is contestation around the political aims of the union. This was evident, for example, in the long debate in the SPM meeting (Vignette 1 in Chapter 5) where shop-stewards differed on whether to “use” the law for workers’ benefit, or to “challenge” it. Differences also surfaced between those who support the COSATU-ANC alliance, and those opposed it. The ‘Ultra-left’ debate demonstrated broader political contestation over the labour movement’s role within the alliance, and the fact that this debate was given prominence points to the significance of this conflict.

The centrality of ideological struggle to union pedagogy, and the contestation over precisely what form its counter-hegemony should take not only accounts for the directedness of union pedagogy but also lies at the heart of the ‘mixed mode’ of union pedagogy.

Historical studies of worker education in South Africa suggest that the coincidence of political contestation and the dominance of performance modes of pedagogy have been constant features of trade union education in the South African labour movement. In the early years of the black trade union movement, education work was led by radicals from within political movements (the Communist Party of South Africa and Trotskyist groupings being prominent – see Bird, 1984) with considerable political contestation between them. Despite the

radical, transformative aims of these educators, they frequently deployed conventional education methods, relying mainly on ‘lectures followed by discussion’ (Bird, 1984 and Szucs n.d.). In the 1970s, with the resurgence of the black trade union movement, there was intense political contestation over what the focus and priorities of worker education should be. In the early 1980s, there was contestation between ‘political unionism’ and ‘industrial unionism’ (see Baskin, 1991), and in the late 1980s, conflict over which political organisation and which class would lead the transition to democracy (Grossman, 1995). Throughout this period, performance modes of pedagogy (with their didactic methods, overt authority of the educator, and explicit criteria for what should be learnt) predominated in union pedagogic *practice* (Friedman, 1987: 91-2 and 185; Cooper and Qotole, 1996: 56; Ginsberg, 1997: Chapter 6; Andrews, 2003: 99 – 100). My argument is that the union’s reliance on performance pedagogy is rooted in the two factors outlined above: the counter-hegemonic ideological thrust of education in the black trade union movement in South Africa, and considerable contestation over what ideological position should be dominant within the counter-hegemonic bloc.

Apparently less directive and more learner-centred, competence forms of pedagogy have not been absent within the South African labour movement. For example, it was shown in Chapter 1 that in the early 1970s, the ideas and methodologies of Paulo Freire were introduced into the Black Consciousness movement via the radical University Christian Movement, and found their way into the emerging black trade union movement (mainly through literacy projects – see Nekhwevha, 2002: 130). Later in the 1980s, COSATU’s education policies came to reflect the growing influence of competence forms of pedagogy within the mass movement for ‘people’s education’: COSATU leaders emphasised “respect for the knowledge that people already have”, and the importance of “extracting maximum value from the collective experience and understanding of the working class” (quoted in Baskin, 1991: 244-5).

However, competence forms of pedagogy were never dominant in practice within the union movement – they were inserted into an already-dominant tradition of performance pedagogy. It is arguable that the strong ideological messages that arise from the union education’s counter-hegemonic thrust, and from the internal

contestation of positions within the union movement, cannot easily be transmitted by a competence model of pedagogy. According to Bernstein, competence modes of pedagogy tend to be 'therapeutic' in orientation, producing pedagogic identities which are not able to *radically change the social structure*.¹³⁰ In other words, competence modes of pedagogy cannot easily transmit the 'radical' messages of union pedagogy. For this, far more directive forms of pedagogy – performance modes of pedagogy – are needed.

There were instances in the workshops and meetings observed where the union's directive pedagogy became 'disciplinary' in the sense that it worked to close off spaces for dialogical interaction, rather than inviting debate. The question was also raised in Chapter 1 (in relation to the radical pedagogy tradition) as to whether it is possible for radical pedagogy to be both directive as well as dialogical. My findings show that performance modes of pedagogy are not necessarily authoritarian or incompatible with more multi-voiced forms of dialogue. In many of the events observed in the context of this case study, a strong performance mode of pedagogy (transmitting a strong regulative discourse) co-existed with lively, open debate and contestation amongst different ideological positions. Significant attempts were made by educators to 'reach' the experiences of the worker participants in the union's programmes, and to integrate the union's political ideology with their experiences. Furthermore, ordinary union members also contributed to the production, transmission and affirmation of the union principles and ideological perspectives.

I will argue below that the multi-voiced nature of the trade union's directive pedagogy is made possible by three other significant features of union pedagogy:

- The dispersed nature of the educator role, and the 'invisible' pedagogic role played by ordinary workers;
- The role of culturally-embedded, symbolic tools of mediation, and oral-performativity in particular; and

¹³⁰ He distinguishes between two modalities of 'therapeutic' discourse: one concerned with developments within individuals, and the other with relations between social groups. The former's concern with individual change is not a good resource for collective opposition, and in the case of the latter, the desire is to *repair* relations between social groups, rather than radically transform them.

- Hybrid forms of knowledge, and the ‘weaving together’ of different forms of knowledge.

A “richly diverse field of essential actors”: the dispersed trade union educator role

In the literature on ‘learning in social movements’, it is generally recognised that these contexts are characterised by a weak social division of labour in terms of who possesses valuable knowledge and who may play the role of educator. Eyerman and Jamison (1991: 94) have argued that “All activists in social movements are, in a sense, ‘movement intellectuals’ because through their activism they contribute to the movement’s collective identity, to making the movement what it is....”

While in sites of formal education, a certain degree of stability and specialisation of the educator role is taken for granted, in the informal or non-formal collective context of the union, pedagogic authority is widely dispersed and there is a weak boundary between educator and learner roles. In structured union education programmes, the educator role is relatively more specialised, involving mainly union staff and ‘experts’ brought in from the outside. However, a non-hierarchical relationship between educators and learners is promoted, and there is very little differentiation or specialisation amongst learners in union education programmes. The distributive rules common to the formal education system are subverted in this community of practice, and all participants are expected to have knowledge of a very wide range of issues, and at a similar depth of conceptual understanding.

In meetings and the day-to-organisational life of the union, epistemological authority is even more widely distributed than in workshops. There is often no clearly identifiable educator and the role of educator is assumed by a “richly diverse field of essential actors” (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 93) who engage in various forms of ‘guided participation’ such as modelling and peer mentoring. In meetings, boundary workers who traverse different communities of practice bring important information which helps workers to recontextualise and understand the significance of their experiences. Ordinary workers also engage with one another to re-construct memories and to construct common understandings.

During the 2002 strike, the boundaries between educators and learners were transformed when workers assumed the role of the ‘collective educator’, using mass action to communicate their experiences, their identity, their world view and their power to the world at large. In this context, the notions of ‘visible pedagogy’ and ‘invisible pedagogy’ assume new meaning and significance. Early on in this research, the important pedagogic roles of ‘experts’ (both from within and without the union) and of ‘boundary workers’ (union members who traverse different communities of practice, bringing contextual information back into the union) were easily ‘visible’ because their epistemological authority was derived from familiar sources (formal study, activist experience, specialist sites of experience and practice). What was far less visible – and what took me far longer to see – was the significant role that ‘ordinary workers’ play as producers and transmitters of knowledge within the organisation. The vast mass of workers potentially constitute ‘invisible pedagogues’ because their role as educators and the knowledge that they bring are generally not seen or recognised by those who research and write about trade union education. This pedagogic role allows ordinary workers to contribute to the union’s regulative discourse – its norms, values and ideological principles – and adds to the multi-voicedness of the union as an activity system, thus moderating the nature of the directive pedagogy so characteristic of this domain.

However, the role that workers play as ‘invisible pedagogues’ varies across settings in my case study, and is dependent on context and history. Grossman (1994) has argued that ‘the collective’ is an essential basis for workers to act as (what I have called) ‘invisible pedagogues’. Particular individuals might appear to rise above the collective because they bring particular kinds of knowledge, or show distinct skills of leadership, but it is the collective that “creates the possibility of individual prominence for the ordinary worker” (Grossman, 1994: 7). Based on his research with a group of dismissed workers who met as a collective for a period of six months, he concluded:

The ‘best’ ideas were not those of the cleverest, or the best-known or the most prominent. They were exactly those ideas which best captured the feelings and hopes and vision of other people there – of the collective. They could only

become – be made – the best ideas if they were adopted, embraced, shared, appropriated by others there. (Grossman, 1994: 8).

Over the last few years, however, the conditions of collectivity which Grossman argues make possible the role of workers as educators and their collective production/reproduction of knowledge, have been increasingly undermined. The ideology and practices associated with collective values are increasingly contested, while there has also been growing pressure on trade unions for greater specialisation to deal with a complex array of issues, and increasing pressure from union members for formally accredited courses. This has tended once again to foreground the more ‘visible’ educator role of those with specialised expertise, and to render more ‘invisible’ the collective pedagogy and knowledge of ordinary workers.

Culturally-embedded tools of mediation: oral performativity

For Vygotsky, tools of mediation are “the means by which the individual acts upon and is acted upon by social, cultural and historical factors” (Daniels, 2001: 14). As noted in Chapter 2, Vygotsky distinguished between three categories of mediators (all socio-cultural in nature): material tools; psychological or symbolic tools; and other human beings. In terms of psychological or symbolic tools of mediation, the two main schools of post-Vygotskian thought have tended to emphasise either ‘activity’ (for example, Scribner or Engeström), or semiotic mediation – language in particular (for example, Wertsch) (Daniels, 2001: 77). All three of the factors considered as promoting learning in the earlier part of this chapter (the organisation itself, people and action/participation) perform the role of tools of mediation in the Vygotskian sense. My findings suggest that in addition to these, a range of further symbolic tools of mediation needs to be considered. These are embedded in the historical and cultural experiences of black people in South Africa, and rooted in the history of the trade union movement specifically.

Orality and performance as tools of mediation

In the data presented in earlier chapters, the reliance on oral forms of communication within the union context is striking. ‘Orality’ as a tool of

mediation needs to be viewed complexly. Daniels (1993: 119-20) argues that rather than language being understood as a 'generalised or abstract system that mediates activity, interaction and thought', it should be treated as "a multitude of distinct speech genres and semiotic devices that are tightly linked with particular social institutions and practices".

Earlier chapters have noted the prevalent and intriguing use of a speech genre involving the use of code-switching and other hybrid language forms in union workshops and meetings. How should this distinctive use of language be understood pedagogically? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to move beyond the theories of pedagogy outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis and turn to the scholarship of Southern African cultural studies which has sought to understand changes in culturally- and historically-situated practices, including orality, performance and written text.

Code-switching is a very widespread phenomenon within the South African urban environment, and its growth has stimulated academic research both nationally and internationally. Slabbert and Finlayson (2002: 254) describe the extensive code-switching taking place in South African townships as "... complex, irrevocable and as such part of the fibre of South African society", and indicative of large-scale language change. It is seen as part of an attempt in the past to circumvent the restrictive laws and practices of apartheid: "... both individuals and groups expressed and identified themselves as being capable of breaking down and transcending the institutionalised ethnic barriers of apartheid" (Slabbert and Finlayson, 2002: 237). It is also seen as a form of accommodation, symbolising the values of democratisation: equality, coming together, mutual understanding and respect (Slabbert and Finlayson, 2002: 254). The role of code-switching in establishing identity is also acknowledged: "... a speaker can evoke the multiple identities associated with each code" (Slabbert and Finlayson, 2002: 245). McCormick's research on code-switching amongst certain Cape Town speech communities (McCormick, 2002) found that the local dialect of Afrikaans is the language of neighbourhood solidarity and informal interaction. English might be used for technological topics, but it would be regarded as 'too cold' when intimate relationships are discussed; while English is the accepted language of meeting 'discourse', people switch to Afrikaans when heated debate arises.

Code-switching in union workshops and meetings plays an important role in acknowledging the multiple cultural identities of workers in the union, helping to build an inclusive, working-class identity, and emphasising the importance of equality and respect amongst workers. Other language devices, such as the use of repetition, serve to emphasise working class identity, while ventriloquism serves to parody management or the ‘bosses’ and reinforce the boundary ‘us’ and ‘them’. McCormick’s research also raises interesting questions about the possible relationship between choice of language and forms of knowledge being used, and this will be pursued later in this chapter.

In the union pedagogic context, oral tools of mediation are often ‘embodied’ (in the sense of being linked closely with the symbolic use of the body) and ‘impassioned’ (imbued with emotion, often anger or humour). Although post-Vygotskian theoretical traditions have tended to focus *either* on ‘language’ *or* ‘activity’ as tools of mediation, in the context of this case study, it seems unhelpful to tackle these two forms of mediation separately as they come together in the union context in the form of ‘oral performativity’. The specific forms of oral performativity vary across settings within the union. Various kinds of modelling, ‘impassioned’ speeches and lively story-telling predominated in workshops and meetings; other kinds of rituals such as the singing of the national anthem, roll-calls and minutes of silence for lost comrades, were also common. In the strike, there was an overall mode-switch (Kress, 2000) from the ‘language’ discourse of union workshops and meetings to one of visual display: the symbolic use of the body in the toyi-toying, marching and dancing as well as the use of visual artefacts such as banners, placards, T-shirts, political symbols and the symbolic use of colour.

Both orality and performance – acting together – are deeply embedded in the history and culture of black South Africans generally, and in the history and organisational culture of the trade unions specifically. Gunner (1999: 50) describes orality, performance, festival, spectacle and image as “the central resources of African culture”. Southern African societies are “dominated by the politics of performance”, and people are “accustomed to carnivalesque cultural activities in which the body played a central part” (Gunner, 1999: 51). Singing and storytelling form a crucial part of performance. Hofmeyr (1993: 56) shows

how the ‘performance craft of oral storytelling’, where elements such as gesture, intonation and rhythm are central to creating meaning, is deeply embedded in South African cultural history, and notes the genre’s bawdy humour, and the role of memory as the ‘fundamental prop of oral culture’. These forms of oral performance should not only be seen in terms of their ‘carnavalesque’ functions. Coullie (1999), referring to the ‘performance craft’ of the *izibongo* or praise poems, stresses their crucial role as a means for disseminating political messages, while Gunner (1999: 52) argues that “perhaps more than any other southern African genre – (they are) knottily analytical”. She cites Kromberg’s study of worker *izibongo* in the 1980s, arguing that this oral genre “played a crucial role in engaging its audiences ... in a kind of public, ongoing debate about contemporary political issues, the nature of modern black identity, ethnicity, the causes of current political violence, and so on” (Gunner, 1999: 52).

The citing of Kromberg’s work underscores the point that forms of oral performativity taking place in the SAMWU workshops, meetings and during the strike are specific, local reinventions of a long-standing cultural tradition within the South African labour movement itself. Historical forms of cultural activity within the labour movement (such as worker poetry, worker plays, choirs and workers’ *izibongo*¹³¹), described in Chapter 1 as peaking during the height of mass struggles in the mid-1980s, still provide “a storehouse for powerful imaginings and recreations” (Sitas, 1990: 2) for trade unions today. How should the different forms of oral performance observed within SAMWU be viewed pedagogically? Sitas’ analysis of the mass worker gatherings in Natal in the 1980s (referred to in Chapter 2) provides a framework within which to consider this question. The communicative significance of mass action during the strike, where it functioned as a form of ‘public education’, has already been noted. The toyi-toying and even the ‘trashing’ engaged in by workers – literally and metaphorically symbolising a world ‘turned upside down’ – may be viewed as part of the carnivalesque mode of communication. According to Sitas (drawing explicitly on Bakhtin), this is a manifestation of *desire* for what is repressed by the social order, and which is given expression through grotesque humour and carnival-like performance (Sitas, 1990: 6).

¹³¹ During the 1980s, poets like Alfred Temba Qabula and Mi S’dumo Hlatswayo utilized *izibongo* to mobilize support for the union movement (Qabula, 1989; Baskin, 1991).

Many of the rituals during the strike, in meetings and workshops – ranging from ‘Amandla’s’ and ‘Viva’s’ to ‘impassioned’ speeches and story-telling – form part of Sitas’ second mode of communication, the defiant or heroic mode, involving ritual affirmation of identity and comradeship. The defiance mode’s weaving together of solidarities and ritual affirmation of identity and comradeship is more prominent in grassroots-level workshops and meetings, together with some clear elements of the ‘carnavalesque’ mode.

Many of these forms of oral performativity also have a cognitive dimension, and involve the exchange of not only symbolic but also rational capital: the exchange of information, discussion and debate around how to analyse and interpret the world, and the communication of political messages (Sitas, 1990: 6). This ‘cognitive mode’ was evidenced in workshops and in many of the meetings observed.

All tools of mediation embody power relations (Daniels, 2001: 80), and thus the forms of mediation used in any pedagogic situation can act as a kind of barometer of the power relations embedded in that situation, and may reflect shifting power relations across contexts. Sitas (1990) argues that the oral performativity prevalent in mass meetings in the 1980s was indicative of ‘grassroots creativity’ and ‘grassroots energy’. In my case study, oral performativity was most prevalent in those sites within the union where workers are able to give expression to their own voice. It was prevalent in meetings where there was multi-voiced communication between workers or shop-steward delegates, and where workers play educative roles for each other. During the strike, the ‘carnavalesque’ and ‘defiant’ modes of performance-genre were clearly dominant, and ordinary workers drew on these cultural resources to assume the role of educators, mediating their experiences and world view outwards to society at large. In other words, the rich performative culture drawn upon in the union context does not simply signal the use of ‘local’, ‘particular’ knowledge. It signals a space for ordinary people to draw on familiar, historical cultural resources to mediate knowledge and meaning, and to give voice to their experience and knowledge.

The shift in the culturally-embedded tools of mediation in use in SAMWU’s Cape Town branch also indicates changing social relations within the branch. African forms of oral performativity have never been dominant, because of the

predominance of coloured workers within this branch. However, with the establishment of the non-racial union in 1987 and increased numbers of African workers in the Cape Town branch, elements of such oral performance – the *toyitoyi*, ‘struggle’ songs, chants – developed as part of its communicative culture (see Chapter 6). The emergence and consolidation of such forms of oral performance reflected not only a cultural shift, but also a power shift, African municipal workers having long occupied the ‘lowest’ level positions within the municipality. Their acquisition of a greater ‘cultural voice’ could therefore be seen as reflecting something of the process of democratisation within the branch. However, current forms of oral performance which predominate within the branch – in particular, code-switching between English and Afrikaans, specific kinds of humour and forms of ‘dramatic’ narrativity – continue to reflect the dominance of coloured working class culture and act both to include and to exclude¹³².

Returning to the question of how the distinctive use of language, and of oral performance genres should be understood pedagogically, my conclusion is that firstly, it allows workers to give expression to their experiential knowledge, thus allowing for the ‘dispersal of pedagogic authority’ referred to above. The important role played by emotion in the ‘defiant’ and ‘carnavalesque’ models of communication in particular reinforces the ideologically directive nature of union pedagogy, and gives a grassroots content to the ideology that plays such a powerful role in this context.

A second function of these culturally-embedded tools of mediation is that they can act to *transform the meaning of the spaces* in which they take place. Wertsch has argued that “... utterances function to presuppose the context of speech in which they occur, on the one hand, or act in a ‘performative’ capacity to create or entail the context, on the other” (quoted in Daniels, 2001: 81). Sitas (1990: 1), also, has argued that mass worker gatherings:

... are events that occur within defined material spaces which presuppose definite socio-historical circumstances. For example, the soccer field used

¹³² Hofmeyr (1993: 177) has also described how gender, and the patriarchal power relations associated with Southern African chiefdoms, “exercise a powerful ordering force in the definition, interpretation and reception of storytelling genres”; gender inequalities may also influence the use of oral-performativity in the union, but I do not have sufficient evidence to show this.

by workers to trumpet their messages might be the company's property and their presence there might also be a result of ferocious conflicts and compromises.

It seems possible, for example, that through the deployment of impassioned speech by workers in some of the Depot-level meetings observed (described in Chapter 5), they were able to claim 'ownership' of their surroundings and transform the meaning of 'the depot' from one controlled by management to one where workers are in control. This demonstrates how workers as educators and learners are not only shaped by, but also actively shape their learning context, and points to the 'utopian' or forward-looking nature of union pedagogy, to be discussed later in this chapter.

As already noted, a third, key role of oral-performative genres is that they act powerfully to construct identity, and include workers within that identity. What my findings made clear, however, is the contested nature of this identity construction; despite union education's powerful regulative discourse, it does not control or monopolise the symbolic forms that workers draw on in their processes of identity construction. For example, workers' actions during the strike, and some of the responses of the Cleansing workers interviewed after the strike (see Chapter 6) suggest that they were drawing on cultural resources to construct identities *other* than (or in addition to) their 'unionist' and working class identity, in particular those associated with Cape Flats gangsterism and described by Stone (2002) as 'disreputable' or 'delinquent' identities. These identities were mobilised by workers during the strike as part of the "underlying socio-cultural forces that transgress and disrupt our received commonsensical notions and habitualized viewpoints" (Gardiner, 2000: 65), even though the union – through its own pedagogy – sought to construct amongst workers a more 'disciplined', class-based identity with which to challenge the status quo.

Thus far, this section has focused on the prevalence of oral-performative tools of mediation within the union context. These are in contrast with the rather ambiguous role of written text – a tool of mediation which is commonly foregrounded in formal, educational contexts. Brown (1999) has warned against too artificial a separation between oral and written forms; Hofmeyr (1993) too has pointed to the complex intersections of oral, performed and printed forms in South African history, and the interdependence of orality and literacy. However, I have

found the role of written text in union pedagogy a puzzling one, and deserving of a discussion on its own.

Written text as a tool of mediation

Chapters 4 and 5 described the rich range of textual forms that were prevalent in union workshops and meetings. Data from these settings plus from individual and focus group interviews indicate that written text, as well as the act of reading widely, is highly valued within the union, with reading being viewed as an important form of self-study. Written reports and media are seen as playing a crucial role in communicating information, while slogans on bags, T-shirts, posters and placards disseminate the political messages of the union and its members. Union leaders are also conscious of the need to gain mastery over the complex written forms that play a central role in the processes of industrial relations and collective bargaining in which they are involved. Furthermore, written texts are an important means of ‘fixing meaning’ (Smith in Farrel, 2000: 149) within a large organisation such as the union: shop-stewards manuals or union constitutions work to standardise what counts as knowledge, and authorise social practices and relations between members of the union across remote local sites.

At the same time, it was noted that little of the large volume of written text distributed within the union seems to be read, and that on numerous occasions, interviewees regretted the absence of a ‘reading culture’ in the union. My analysis posed the question of how to make sense of the role of written text within the processes of education and learning within the union. It concluded that written text could be viewed as playing a symbolic function as “artefacts of performance” (McEwan and Malan, 1996: 207), signalling the union’s success in engaging with a wide range of significant issues and forums, or – as in the case of the full-time shop-steward described in Chapter 6 who discovered the symbolic use of his red union training manual as a tool against management – to symbolically assert the power of the union.

It is possible to see the widespread ambivalence of workers towards written text as linked to the broader history of literacy, orality and text in the South African setting, and to the history of textual practices within the Cape Town branch of

SAMWU in particular. Brown argues that the ‘orality-literacy’ question echoes the processes of colonial domination, and in fact:

...epitomises the conceptual and historical themes of southern African life: colonial dispossession and resistance; ethnic and national identifications; rural-urban contacts and migrations; indigenous belief and Christianity; tradition and modernity; local and global identities; industrialisation and labour organisation; land ownership; black subjugation and assertion; and so on (Brown, 1999: 15).

Written text is therefore deeply implicated in the origins of the racialised, class-based and gendered power relations of modern-day South Africa. More specifically, in the history of SAMWU’s Cape Town branch, and in the experiences of workers in that branch, written text – particularly in English – historically represented the power of the Council employers and the bureaucratic, elitist union leadership which dominated the branch up until the late 1970s. In this context it is possible to see why workers may view text not only with respect, but also with suspicion; it may also be possible to view workers’ reluctance to engage with text as an act of silent resistance to the process of ‘textualisation of practice’ that has taken place over the last fifteen years (a *re-textualisation* of practice in the case of this union branch), and the move that this represents from more dialogical, oral forms of communication to the more univocal, ‘authoritative’ forms that text represents.

However, the role of written text as a tool of mediation in the union context is not fixed by history. It was interesting to see the way in which workers in one of the union’s substructures attempted to transcribe the “defiant” oral genre into written form in their report to the BEC (see Chapter 5), thus attempting to give it a more dialogic character. Also, the memories of one worker, that “... in the past we prepared ourselves for waging battle by reading....” (FGI 1), suggest that written text, in a particular kind of articulation with orality and action, can potentially play give a voice to ordinary members of the union.

Thus far, the discussion in this chapter has focused on the ‘how’ and ‘who’ of pedagogy: the boundaries between educator and learner roles, forms of pedagogy, and the significance of culturally-embedded tools of mediation. It has argued that while the strong ideologically-directive nature of union pedagogy may make it authoritarian in character, it does not necessarily do so. In this case study, the

widely dispersed educator role and the culturally-embedded tools of mediation both reinforce the ideologically directive nature of union pedagogy, while at the same time giving it grassroots content.

The following section focuses on the ‘what’ in union pedagogy – the forms of knowledge that are acquired and produced.

Hybridity and ‘weaving’ of knowledge in union pedagogy

One of the questions posed in both Chapters 1 and 2 of this study was how to theorise the nature of knowledge used and produced in union pedagogy. This question emerged historically and theoretically in relation to how workers’ experiential knowledge articulates with knowledge derived from outside of workers’ experiences, and which of these forms of knowledge are privileged under what conditions. While Bernstein provides a language of description with which to talk about different modalities of knowledge, much of my data challenges the synchronic and static nature of Bernstein’s knowledge categories, or at least the way these categories are often used in the literature (Moore and Muller, 2002: 12)¹³³. A simple, dualist classification of knowledge into ‘everyday’ and ‘scientific’ knowledge, or horizontal and vertical discourses, is not nuanced enough to make sense of the complex nature of knowledge in use in the union context; more dynamic questions regarding how different forms of knowledge articulate with one another need to be posed.

My findings raise questions about the notion that knowledge in ‘everyday’ settings is undifferentiated, and point to the importance of not collapsing ‘site’ into ‘form of knowledge’. Although my case study comprises a site outside of the formal education system, it does not follow that this is a site of *only* experiential knowledge, or that elements of formal, hierarchically-organised kinds of knowledge cannot be found here. There are many different forms of knowledge drawn on as resources in trade union pedagogy ranging from local and segmental forms of knowledge to more analytical and conceptual forms, including elements of more highly codified forms of knowledge such as economics and the law. This

¹³³ Bernstein (1996:4) argues that his modalities do not represent simple dichotomies but rather oppositional forms, each with a ‘range of realisations’. I am grateful to Judy Harris for pointing this out.

knowledge is drawn from workers' present and past experiences within and outside of their workplaces, other communities of practice outside of the union in which workers participate, specialist research groups, individuals with expertise, and unionists' own experiences of formal, academic study.

One of the most distinctive features of knowledge in the union context is its *hybridity*. This term is not used to imply that there is no difference between forms of knowledge¹³⁴, but refers rather to the *multifaceted* nature of knowledge. This is perhaps most evident in oral-performativity, where knowledge is both conceptual and 'embodied', intellectual and 'impassioned'. As Gunner (1999: 52) points out, such knowledge is *both* carnivalesque *as well as* 'knottily analytical' in form and function.

In addition to its hybridity, there is another distinctive feature of knowledge in the trade union context: the continuous, dialectical movement between different forms of knowledge. It was shown in Chapter 5 how in many union meetings (perhaps most notably in the long debate around the relationship between legal means of struggle and mass action) participants engaged in a movement between the concrete and the abstract, the local and the global, the specific and the general, and between conceptual questions and practical, strategic questions. General and abstract concepts are not simply imported from the 'outside', but are generated from within through an organic process of making 'connections between objects not obviously connected' (Young, 2002: 15).

It was suggested in earlier chapters that a useful metaphor to capture this dynamic and iterative movement back and forth between different forms of knowledge is that of 'weaving'. This echoes Breier's (2003: 48-9) findings of "complex interweaving of abstract and concrete in the discourses of both lecturers and learners" on the university labour law courses she examined, suggesting that it is unlikely that this process is unique to the trade union pedagogic context. However, my interpretation is at odds with Breier's when she argues that the trade unionists on the labour law courses did not succeed in moving from their 'local experiences' to general rules and principles. She concludes that although unionists brought developed, theorized arguments into the classroom, they tended to be

¹³⁴ As Muller (2000a: 57) points out, this is one interpretation of 'hybridity'.

unable to challenge lecturers' generalisations with their own, alternative generalisations, but were only able to counter with 'localisations' (Breier, 2003: 247-8). In my case study, it is clear that trade unionists not only moved between the local and the global, and between concrete and abstract, but they also used localising strategies ('pulling' the general rule down to the local level) as well as generalising strategies (elevating the particular beyond its singularity into the realm of the general).

The process of 'weaving together' different kinds of knowledge is suggestive of the kind of 'dialectical gap-closing' activity that Engeström (2002) talks of that characterises collaborative problem-solving learning within activity systems. Vygotsky also viewed the process of moving dialectically between different forms of knowledge as combining the relative strengths of both 'scientific' and 'everyday' concepts, and compensating for their respective weaknesses¹³⁵.

My conclusion is that there is no simple answer to the question of which side of the 'knowledge boundary' (between 'sacred' and 'profane', or between horizontal and vertical discourses) the knowledge constructed and transmitted in the trade union pedagogic context should be located. Knowledge in trade union pedagogy incorporates elements of more vertical knowledge discourses, and these articulate with horizontal knowledge discourses in interesting ways. Knowledge is frequently *both* local *and* general (oriented towards making general, timeless statements); it draws on both unspecialised and specialised languages; it is required to be of immediate usefulness, but it also cuts across history and is oriented towards the future; it is often acquired tacitly through demonstration, acquisition or modelling, but may also be taught explicitly through linguistic elaboration.

What makes trade union knowledge distinctive is not so much its 'everyday-ness' in the Bernsteinian sense, but rather the way it weaves together different categories of knowledge, and thus *transgresses* the boundaries proposed by dualist accounts. The strike – with its combination of mind and body, abstract and concrete, cognitive and emotive, local and global meaning – was the setting where

¹³⁵ Vygotsky argued that "... the weakness of the everyday concept lies in its incapacity for abstraction..." while "... the weakness of the scientific concept lies in its verbalism, in its insufficient saturation with the concrete..." (quoted in Daniels, 2001: 53) .

this infringement of boundaries was most tellingly achieved. These findings do not invalidate the need for a language with which to point to different forms or features of knowledge, but they do suggest that these categories should not be seen as site-specific or as functioning as (largely synchronic and static) binary opposites. We need a language and methodology that can adequately capture the dynamic processes of complex articulation of different forms of knowledge in use.

What is the broader significance of these hybrid forms of knowledge within the union context? Eyerman and Jamison (1991: 165) have argued that “social movement activists develop new ideas that are fundamental to broader processes of human creativity”, and Holford has pointed to the role that social movements play in generating new knowledge (1995: 101). According to Eyerman and Jamison (1991: 59), a crucial way in which this new knowledge is produced is by ‘recombining or connecting previously separate types of knowledge with each other’, and this ‘recombination of expertise’ transforms knowledge itself. It is possible to see in the hybridity of the knowledge produced in union pedagogy a form of new knowledge production. The dialectical movement between different forms of knowledge in union pedagogy illustrates the process of generating valid knowledge by finding common ground between workers’ experiences and points of view, and is inextricably bound up with the process of building the collective, thus illustrating Durkheim’s principle that “truth is produced in social communities” (Muller, 2000a: 79).

Hybridity, tools of mediation and forms of pedagogy

How should we view the relationship between such hybrid knowledge forms and the distinctive forms of pedagogy and tools of mediation outlined in previous sections of this chapter? It is my argument that the weaving together of different forms of knowledge is facilitated by the culturally-embedded tools of mediation in use in union pedagogy – the oral performativity, and the humour, emotion and action embedded in this – discussed earlier in this chapter. Rather than these culturally-embedded tools of mediation being seen as an obstacle for learning – locking learning into a parochial, restricted knowledge structure – it is possible to view them as acting as a rich *resource* for learning in this context.

These tools of mediation are embedded in ‘local’ culture and may represent a tacit, embodied form of knowledge, but they can at the same time function to impart knowledge of a general and abstract kind. For example, the mass action of the strike served to impart a form of ‘embodied knowledge’ that was perhaps more analytical and abstract, and more universal in its intention, than any of the knowledge drawn on in other union settings. In meetings, certain of these tools of mediation – for example, story-telling – drew on local cultural traditions in order to make broad, abstract points. Chapter 4 presented evidence to suggest that educators deliberately make use of oral performative genres to mediate and negotiate transitions between participants’ experiential knowledge and (for example) legal discourses¹³⁶.

It seems important not to conflate ‘tools of mediation’ with ‘form of knowledge’. Learning in the union context is deeply ‘situated’ (as is all learning), and union pedagogy’s tools of mediation are embedded in local culture and history; however, the forms of knowledge drawn on include the abstract, the general and the global. In other words, ‘local’ and ‘situated’ describe *the tools of mediation*, but not necessarily the nature or form of knowledge.

Familiarity with culturally embedded oral-performative genres, and the ability to put them to use is therefore an important skill or attribute required of educators in the trade union context. The hybrid forms of knowledge prevalent in the union context are facilitated by the ‘widely distributed’ educator role discussed earlier, and in particular, by the pedagogic role played by workers with an intimate knowledge of culturally-embedded tools of mediation. The weak boundaries between different forms of knowledge (weak ‘classification’ in Bernstein’s terms) is paralleled by a weak division of labour in respect of epistemological and pedagogic authority in the union context, allowing ordinary workers to play pedagogic roles.

Crossing knowledge boundaries: pragmatic or subversive?

How should the broader significance of the hybridity of knowledge in the union context be understood? Hybrid forms of knowledge can be seen as playing a

¹³⁶ Stein (2003: 258) argues that different modes of communication have different affordances in terms of the kinds of knowledge that they can express.

pragmatic role – enabling unionists to deal with the very wide range of contextual issues that currently confront workers, ranging from their immediate experiences in the workplace to national politics and international economic developments. They also allow union pedagogy to build inclusiveness amongst people with very different levels of formal knowledge. However, if social relations are embedded in the very structure of knowledge itself, then what does it mean in terms of power relations when such hybrid forms of knowledge are generated?

It is arguable that the hybridity of knowledge needs to be seen in the context of the key purpose of union pedagogy, which is to challenge the centres of hegemonic power in society. The concept of hybridity has featured strongly in the literature on colonialism, postcolonialism and global identities, where it is seen as a form of ‘strategic borrowing’ – an attempt to ‘control the controllers’. For example, according to Rutherford (1990), in Homi Bhabha’s analyses of identity construction and subject formation under colonialism, hybridity is seen as subversive and transgressive – a “third space” between the traditional and the colonial. Young (1990: 148) argues that Bhabha’s notion of the hybrid is “...the part object that articulates colonial and native knowledges and which can enable active forms of resistance”. He quotes Bhabha as saying that hybridity is a ‘strategic reversal of the process of domination’ in that it “reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority” (Young, 1990: 148).

It is therefore possible to see hybrid forms of knowledge in the union context as ‘acts of resistance’, as forms of ‘denied’ knowledge which seek to destabilize the more hierarchical and discipline-based forms of knowledge which remain most powerful in society. However, this interpretation of knowledge in the union context can only be considered in the context of the last feature which is distinctive of union pedagogy: the ambivalent combination of transformative vision and accommodation, or even collusion.

Social purpose of union pedagogy: transformation or accomodation?

As noted in Chapter 2, Sadovnik (1995) has critiqued Bernstein’s work by arguing that it is important to explain not only how social order is reproduced through

pedagogy, but also how it is challenged. This study of union pedagogy offers some insight into the ways that possibilities for change are created within, and by pedagogy.

Eyerman and Jameson have argued that social movements by definition have an 'utopian mission', and that through their 'socially experimental activity' they 'specify the contours of the desirable' (1991: 68; 82). In my case study, the union's 'socially experimental activity' and the role of the 'everyday' as a source of subversion, resistance and 'utopian impulse' (Gardiner, 2000: 17) was perhaps most visible in the strikers' demands for change and transformation, and their vision of a 'united working class' and 'socialist future'. The 'utopian' could also be seen in the memories of the past which the strike evoked, as well as being implicit in workers' critiques of the union's performance during the strike. Workers' experimentation during the strike was a form of 'trialling of knowledge in action', and their attempts to devise solutions to the organisational and tactical problems they faced may be seen as an example of what Engeström (2002: 8-10) has described as 'imaginative praxis'. It was these forms of creative and active engagement that appeared to awaken in some workers questions about how society functions, a broader interest in gaining more understanding about politics, history and the economy, critical reflection on the functioning of their own organisation, and a more general thirst for new knowledge.

The 'hidden potentialities of the everyday' were visible not only in the strike, but in a less dramatic way in union meetings, where workers attempted to develop a new and better way of understanding the world in order to change it. The dialogical nature of meetings allowed particular visions of future possibility to be articulated: a future where democracy in the union would be rebuilt and workers would once again be committed and passionate; where capacity would be shared and the union would 'belong' to its members; where a 'decent future' for workers' children and grandchildren would be assured; and where no longer will "the rich get richer and the poor poorer".

However, it was clear that municipal workers were not in a space of "idealized opposition to hegemony, outside of the space of hegemony" (Soudien, 2002: 10). This is the other meaning of 'hybridity': those that are oppressed not only

challenge and subvert the dominant power relations through their hybrid practices, but these practices may also reproduce and perpetuate these power relations.

According to Engeström, it is structural contradictions in an activity system – reflecting broader social contradictions – that constitute the critical source of new learning, and can that potentially turn into ‘transformatory moments’. These become the ‘motive force of change and development’ (Engeström in Daniels, 2001: 91) when the kind of learning required to resolve these contradictions involves “expansive, breaking out of context” (Engeström in Daniels, 2001: 10), and taking a step into the unknown. However, my case study suggests that such contradictions are not easily resolved. For example, while workers were critical of privatisation and outsourcing, it was clear that the ideology of ‘corporatisation’ of public services had influenced unionists’ and workers’ thinking around privatisation, and compromising their resistance to it. Union members grappled with problems of having to negotiate with union members who had moved into management positions, and with shop-stewards who were ‘not committed’, or unprepared to take action or disobey management’s rules. Workers felt torn between loyalty to their federation’s commitment to an alliance with the ruling party on the one hand, and their feelings of being ‘sold out’ by the new ANC government on the other. Some of the union’s actions during the strike illustrated the tension that exists between the trade union movement’s desire for inclusion within the democratic – but still capitalist – state, and its desire to transform that state.

People within the union seem to engage in a ‘dance’ of resistance and accommodation. It was noted in all three of the data analysis chapters that union pedagogy reflects and reproduces some of the key lines of social inequality within the union’s own ranks. This was visible in the way in which language and literacy acted both to include and to exclude; in the instances of racial or urban-rural tensions alluded to; and in the unequal position of women within the organisation. All of these factors acted to restrict the contributions of some workers to the collective ‘pool’ of knowledge. Structural relations of power were also reflected in some of the tensions, ambiguities and contradictions in workers’ attitudes towards knowledge and learning, in particular, who’s knowledge ‘counts’ (those with ‘schooled knowledge’ or workers’ experiential knowledge?) and what the

purpose of knowledge should be (upward mobility in a hierarchical society or the 'collective good'?).

Engeström offers a theory of collective learning which sees tensions and contradictions as being productive, and potentially a source of new learning and knowledge. The findings from this case study suggest that the union can be viewed as an activity system with the potential of a 'breakthrough into learning activity' in Engeström's (1991a, 2002) sense of 'going beyond the given' in a process in which new knowledge is produced. However, we also need to be able to account for why the tensions and contradictions faced by participants within an activity system *do not always* translate into a 'breakthrough into learning'.

For Engeström it is the multi-voicedness of the activity system that is the source of change. Different and competing standpoints, interests and histories are a source of both 'trouble and innovation': they create instability, internal tensions, struggles and contradictions. The union's internal reproduction of some of the key lines of inequality within capitalist society limits the multi-voicedness of this activity system by excluding some voices, or by failing to recognise or affirm the knowledge carried by certain voices. This restricts the ability of members of this activity system to 'breakthrough into learning activity' of a kind that might help workers to move closer towards their 'utopian vision'.

CHAPTER 8:

TOWARDS AN ANALYTICAL MODEL OF PEDAGOGY, LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE IN 'EVERYDAY' CONTEXTS

Developing a model

Throughout the last four chapters, the analysis has drawn flexibly on a combination of conceptual tools from four bodies of theory, making use of the classificatory power of Bernstein's distinctions between different forms of pedagogy; the Situated Learning theorists' notion of learning as social practice; the dialectical approach of Vygotsky and his notion of tools of mediation as bearers of culture and history; and Bakhtin's notions of dialogicality and multi-voicedness, as well as his notion of the 'everyday' as simultaneously an alienated and potentially liberated site with the power to resist and transform.

Throughout the process of analysis and interpretation, there was a parallel concern with developing an analytical model that might facilitate a dialogue between research across different education domains, in a way that acknowledges pedagogic and epistemological difference and diversity in a non-elitist way. The outcome of this is a model involving the combination and extension of the four theoretical perspectives above, and which seeks to show more systematically how conceptual tools from each of these theories correspond to those of others¹³⁷.

This model – presented in Figure 1 below – is an extension of that proposed by the Activity Theorists, Cole and Engeström (1993: 8), and is, in part, implicit in Daniels' work (Daniels, 2001: 86-92 and Daniels, 2005).

¹³⁷ My thanks go to my colleague, Joanne Hardman, who first suggested to me how these theoretical tools might correspond..

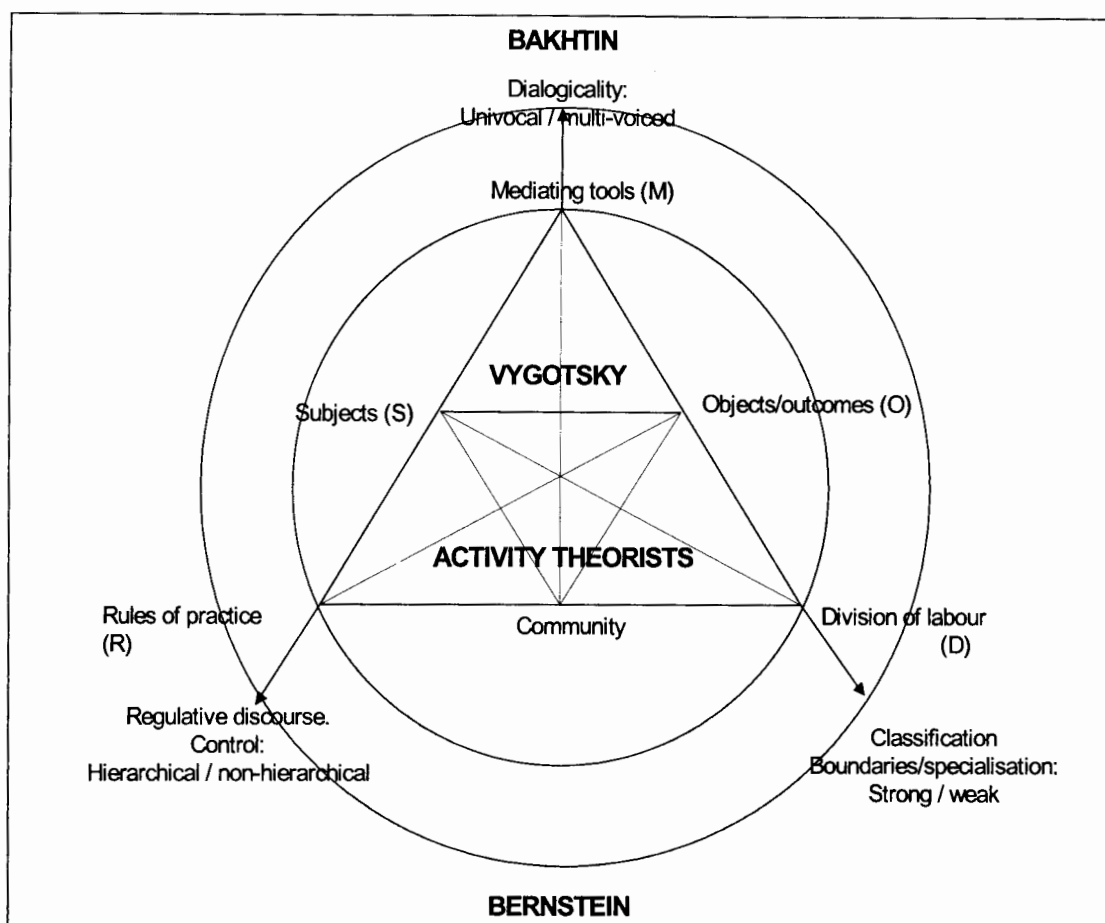


Figure 1: A proposed model for the analysis of pedagogy across formal and non-formal/informal pedagogic contexts

At the heart of this analytical model is Vygotsky's classic triangle of subjects, objects and tools of mediation. This simple model makes the important points that learning is never a solitary, individual activity but always takes place in social interaction with others, and involves mediation by language as well as other symbolic tools that are embedded in culture and history. In this thesis, the concept of 'tools of mediation' (M) allowed me to explore a range of factors to answer the question: 'who' or 'what' teaches workers in the context of their own trade union organisation, while Vygotsky's dialectical approach prompted my exploration of how 'everyday' and 'scientific' knowledge are brought into dynamic interaction.

The next 'layer' of this analytical model includes the elements of 'community'(C), 'rules' (R) and 'division of labour' (D). This allows the analysis to move beyond the teacher-learner dyad to the foregrounding of organisational, collective contexts of learning. My analyses of learning, pedagogy and knowledge

in the 'everyday' trade union context drew on post-Vygotskian activity theorists to locate these processes within a particular community of practice, with a specific division of labour and particular rules of social interaction. This allowed me to conceptualise education as happening not only in recognisable pedagogic contexts such as seminars or workshops, but also as a dimension of workers' participation and collective activities within the union. This perspective pointed to the role of the organisational environment as a tool of mediation: the fact that organisational practices and rituals contain the accumulated knowledge of prior generations means that participation in these practices and rituals facilitates learning.

This model extends that of the Activity Theorists by adding an outer 'layer' of concepts drawing on Bernstein and Bakhtin. This extension of the 'bounded context' approach of the Activity Theorists is intended to enable a fuller exploration of the relationship between the 'micro' features of pedagogy and the 'macro' structures and social relations of society. The outer layer of the model is arranged in such a way that it shows how concepts at the first and second levels of the model might 'translate' into the conceptual language of the third level.

Bernstein offers a more extended social perspective of both 'division of labour' and 'rules' than do the Activity Theorists. 'Division of labour' is located within Bernstein's structural level of analysis of pedagogic discourse which interrogates the degree of specialisation of roles and specialised forms of knowledge associated with any pedagogic discourse, and the relations of power associated with these. The key concept here is that of boundary (classification) with strength of boundary representing degree of specialisation. In my case study of a site of pedagogy outside of the formal system, it was important to analyse the strength or weakness of the boundaries between different forms of knowledge and between educator and learner roles, as these said something important about the nature of power relations in this context, and the specific character of union pedagogy.

The 'rules of practice' of an activity system are part of Bernstein's interactional level of analysis, and this concept refers to social relations between educators and learners in terms of hierarchy and control, *as well as* how these are related to the rules of social order at the macro level of society. This focus on two different levels of social relations allowed me to make sense of the complex and apparently contradictory social purpose (O) of union pedagogy.

Further exploration of the question of 'voice' incorporated into my analytical framework Bakhtin's notion of dialogicality that emphasises how the choice of social language and other symbolic tools of mediation used in pedagogy may be 'read' as a barometer of social hierarchies and power relationships. These concepts were used to explore whose 'voices' (from within the union) were most strongly asserted and heard, and how the particular tools of mediation in use in union pedagogy reproduced or challenged broader relations of social power. Bakhtin's approach also points to the need to understand the 'everyday' pedagogic context of the union not as a simple, undifferentiated terrain but as a complex and contradictory site of both reproduction and resistance to hegemonic discourses.

Both Bernstein and Bakhtin provide a language to identify the range of modalities that elements of the model may assume. This is also a dynamic model. Research questions may be posed by asking how the different elements represented within this system come into dynamic interaction.

This analytical model draws on theories of pedagogy usually used to interrogate sites of formal education such as the school or university, as well those used to analyse informal or non-formal sites of pedagogy in the workplace (Situated Learning and Activity theorists). It is thus intended to facilitate a 'conversation' or dialogue between research into pedagogy in informal and non-formal, collective and social action-oriented contexts, and research that focuses on more specialised education domains or on workplace learning. This analytical model allows key questions to be posed that are rarely asked in analyses of pedagogy in more formal contexts, because their answers tend to be taken for granted:

In terms of educator and learner roles and relationships:

In addition to questions about the rules of social interaction between educators and learners, and how these are implicated in power relations, it suggests that more basic questions need to be asked:

- Who (from within the activity system) steps into the role of educator (amongst their other roles) and how specialised is this role?

- To what extent do patterns of participation within the activity system create the potential for the role of educator to be played by a collective?
- Who are the learners, and how much differentiation and specialisation is there amongst them?

In terms of forms of pedagogy / learning:

In addition to questions about forms of pedagogy, and relations of social power and control embedded in those forms, this model allows a prior question to be posed:

- Across what sites and activities do ‘teaching’ and learning take place?
- What forms of social activity do members of this activity system engage in that has learning as one of its significant outcomes?

This allows for the recognition of pedagogy in sites not normally recognised as pedagogic in nature.

In terms of tools of mediation:

This model suggests that researchers need to look beyond those symbolic tools of mediation normally privileged in formal educational contexts, namely language and written text, and explore additional symbolic tools of mediation such as the use of the body, sound and voice, collective action and visual images as semiotic devices. It also allows for further questions to be posed:

- What relationship exists between these particular symbolic tools, and the socio-cultural history of educators and learners?
- Whose ‘voices’ (from inside and outside this community of practice) do the dominant tools of mediation carry, and what social power implications does this have?

In terms of knowledge:

Instead of taking as a starting point the forms of knowledge that the formal curriculum in specialised pedagogic domains tends to privilege, this model suggests that more basic questions need to be answered:

- What knowledge, or whose knowledge, is regarded as of greatest value to this activity system? How does this knowledge hierarchy reflect or challenge hegemonic notions of knowledge hierarchies?
- Who is regarded as a source of epistemological authority?
- How do different forms of knowledge articulate with one another? What, in particular, is the relationship between experiential knowledge and more formal, specialised forms of knowledge?

In terms of the social purposes of pedagogy:

In the formal education system and in learning in the workplace, it is assumed that the key purpose of education or training is the reproduction of culture, and the outcomes of learning are measured accordingly. In social-action oriented contexts of pedagogy however, we need to interrogate the potential role of pedagogy in social change and pose the question:

- Is pedagogy primarily reproductive or transformatory in relation to its broad social purpose?
- What facilitates or inhibits pedagogy's capacity to effect transformation and social change?

Using the model to summarise the thesis' findings

This thesis has demonstrated how elements of pedagogy, learning and knowledge 'work together' in an organisational site which lies outside of the formal education system, is oriented towards collectivity, and is oppositional in relation to key centres of social power. My analysis has focused on the central role of ideology in union pedagogy (rules of practice or regulative discourse – R). Its strong, ideological 'directedness' expresses itself not only in visible forms of performance pedagogy, but also in 'invisible', competence forms of pedagogy across different sites of the union.

In contrast to the assumptions normally made about radical pedagogy, union pedagogy is a 'mixed pallet' where a competence model is inserted into a more dominant performance model of pedagogy. However, the hierarchical relations

normally associated with performance pedagogy are moderated by other key elements of union pedagogy: the interchangeability of educator and learner roles and dispersed nature of pedagogic authority (weak division of labour – D); the use of a wide range of symbolic tools of mediation (M) that are embedded in the cultural history of the participants of this activity system (dialogical and multi-voiced), enabling them to contribute to the form and content of the pedagogic message; and the hybrid forms of knowledge (weak boundaries between different forms of knowledge – D) which allow participants to interweave their own experiential knowledge with knowledge derived from more formal sources of epistemological authority.

The ‘directedness’ of union pedagogy is directly linked to its counter-hegemonic social purpose (O), and is intensified in a context where the construction of political identities of workers is increasingly contested. Despite its espoused commitment to radical social transformation, union pedagogy is in practice an ambivalent combination of resistance, transformative vision and accommodation, and it reproduces within itself some of the key lines of social inequality that it aspires to bring an end to.

In the final part of this chapter, I will briefly consider the implications of these findings.

Broader significance of the findings

In post-apartheid South Africa, issues of redress, equity, human rights and inclusivity are central to the building of a democratic culture. Arguments about the fundamental equality of different kinds of knowledge – at the basis of new education policies around Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – are essential to attempts to build a new, inclusive culture of learning. However, when such arguments assume the ‘sameness’ of all kinds of knowledge, and involve a reluctance to point to any epistemological difference, this may be counter-productive pedagogically and in terms of achieving transformative educational goals.

The argument developed in this thesis shows that the ‘logic’ of pedagogy, learning and knowledge in the trade union setting *is* very different compared to

that of other key sites of pedagogy, in particular, the specialised domains of the formal education system (schooling and universities):

- In contrast with the hierarchical relations between educator and learner, and specialisation of learner roles in formal education, in the trade union context, the roles of educator and learner are flexible, interchangeable, and reciprocal in relation to each other;
- Whereas in formal education, pedagogic 'space' is demarcated and defined, in the trade union, learning is seen as taking place within and across a rich variety of activities;
- In formal education, written text dominates and tools of mediation are distant from the socio-cultural history of black, working class South Africans, in contrast with their cultural and historical embeddedness in working class life in the trade union context;
- While formal educational contexts claim to be politically dispassionate, and the purpose of learning is often distanced from application – particularly from meeting collective social needs, pedagogy in the union context is 'impassioned', ideologically directive and linked closely to social application.
- While formal education's broader social purpose foregrounds the reproduction of social order and culture, union pedagogy is oriented towards challenging dominant power relations.

One of the implications of this is that it is not easy for the workers whose learning histories are embedded in the pedagogic practices of the trade union, to 'succeed' in a higher education context. Without fundamental change to the rules and practices of higher education, these workers will need to acquire new learning roles and dispositions. Furthermore, in order to do justice to workers' prior knowledge, university educators will need to understand the affordances and limitations of different tools of mediation; to appreciate that conceptual knowledge can be expressed in a variety of different ways; and to understand how different forms of knowledge articulate together in diverse and complex ways.

At the same time, this thesis has demonstrated that pedagogy and knowledge in informal or non-formal education settings should not be portrayed as a 'deficit' or absence of that found in formal education settings. On the contrary, it can enrich our understandings of what pedagogy and knowledge can be, and provide viable alternatives to forms of pedagogy found in traditional educational settings.

The descriptions and analyses of pedagogy in this thesis demonstrate the potential to use knowledge as a collective resource; they show what 'dialogical' or multi-voiced pedagogic communication can look like, and illustrate how powerful and effective pedagogy can be when it is deeply embedded in the cultural resources of ordinary people.

The descriptions and analyses of workers' knowledge in this thesis point to its holistic, interconnected nature. Knowledge in the trade union context is not only instrumental: it is about the development of all aspects of human life. Socially useful knowledge is not either abstract, general and conceptual or concrete, particular and practical, but involves dialectical movement between these forms. Knowledge in the trade union context is about learning to accommodate successfully to the given world, as well learning to change that world. In the context of struggling for social change, workers' knowledge is both about the 'how' and the 'why' of existence, and involves questions about morality, ethics, values and justice.

REFERENCES

- Allman, P. 1994. Paulo Freire's contributions to radical adult education. *Studies in the Education of Adults*. 26 2: 144 – 161.
- Allman, P. & Wallis, J. 1995. Gramsci's challenge to the politics of the left in 'Our Times'. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. 14 (2): 120-143.
- Althusser, L. 1971. Ideology and ideological state apparatuses. In Althusser, L. *Lenin and philosophy and other essays*. London: New Left Books.
- ANC/COSATU. 1993. A Framework for lifelong learning: a unified, multi-path approach to education and training. Draft discussion document prepared for the National Training policy Workshop: 18-20 June, Johannesburg.
- Andrews, S. D. 2003. Cosatu's policy on worker education, 1985 – 1992: changes and continuities. Masters Dissertation, School of Education, University of Cape Town.
- Apple, M. W. 1995. Education, culture, and class power: Basil Bernstein and the neo-Marxist sociology of education. In Sadovnik, A. R. Ed. *Knowledge and pedagogy: The sociology of Basil Bernstein*. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Avis, J. 1995. The validation of learner experience: a conservative practice? *Studies in the Education of Adults*. 27 (2): 173-186.
- Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. 2001. *The practice of social research*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Bakhtin, M. 1965/1994. Rabelais and his world. In Morris, P. Ed. *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Volshinov*. London, New York, Sydney and Auckland: Arnold Publishers.
- Bakhtin, M. 1994. Speech Genres and other Late Essays. In Morris, P. Ed., *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Volshinov*. London, New York, Sydney and Auckland: Arnold Publishers.
- Ball, M. J. 2003. Considering trade union education as a community of practice. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. May-June: 297-310.
- Barnett, R. 2000. Working knowledge. In Garrick, J. & Rhodes, C. Eds. *Research and knowledge at work*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Barret, J. et al 1985. *Vukani Makhosikazi: South African Women Speak*. London: CIIR.
- Baskin, J. 1991. *Striking Back: A History of Cosatu*. Johannesburg. Ravan Press.
- Baskin, J. Ed. 1996. *Unions in Transition: Cosatu at the dawn of democracy*. Johannesburg: NALEDI.
- Bernstein, B. 1993. Foreword. In Daniels, H. Ed. *Charting the agenda: Education activity after Vygotsky*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bernstein, B. 1996. *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity: Theory, Research, Critique*. London: Taylor and Francis Ltd.

- Bernstein, B. 1999 Vertical and Horizontal Discourse. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20 (2): 157-173.
- Bird, A. 1984. Black Adult Night School Movements on the Witwatersrand, 1920 – 1980. In Kallaway, P. Ed. *Apartheid and Education*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.
- Bird, A. 1990. NUMSA's vocational Training Project. *South African Labour Bulletin*. 15 (1), 10-16.
- Bonnin, D. 1987. Class Consciousness and Conflict in the Natal Midlands: the Case Study of BTR Sarmcol Workers. MA Thesis, University of Natal, Durban.
- Boud, D. 1990. Making the most of experience. *Studies in Continuing Education*. 12 (2): 61-80.
- Boud, D., Cohen, R. & Walker, D. Eds. 1993. *Using Experience for Learning*. Buckingham, England: Society for Research into Higher Education.
- Boud, D. & Garrick, J. Eds. 1999. *Understanding learning at work*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Brah, A. & Hoy, J. 1989. Experiential learning: A new orthodoxy? In Weil, S. W. & McGill, W. Eds. *Making sense of experiential learning: Diversity in theory and practice*. Milton Keynes: Society into Research in Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Breier, M. 2003. The recruitment and recognition of prior informal experience in the pedagogy of two university courses in labour law. PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town.
- Brookfield, S. 1998. Against naïve romanticism: from celebration to the critical analysis of experience. *Studies in Continuing Education*. 20 (2): 127-142.
- Brown, D. 1999. Introduction. In Brown, D. Ed. *Oral literature and performance in Southern Africa*. Oxford: James Curry.
- Buhlungu, S. 2000. Unions chart their course in a tough new world. *Sunday Times*. September 10.
- Burawoy, M. 1998. The extended case study method. *Sociological Theory*. 16 (1): 4-33.
- Cape Times. 2002a. 4 July.
- Cape Times. 2002b. Samwu can't march in our town – Cape Unicity. 11 July.
- Carspecken, P.F. 1996. *Critical ethnography in educational research*. New York & London: Routledge.
- CCCS. 1978. *On ideology*. London: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and Hutchinson.
- Chaiklin, S., & Lave, J. 1993. *Understanding practice: Perspectives on activity and context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coben, D. 1995. Revisiting Gramsci. *Studies in the Education of Adults*. 27 (1): 36-51.
- Coetzee, G. 2002. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the Foundation course for South African Municipal Workers' Union (SAMWU) shop stewards with a

- focus on the application of appropriate grievance procedures and disciplinary hearings within the workplace. Cape Town. Flag Skills Development Programmes. Unpublished.
- Cole, M. & Engeström, Y. 1993. A cultural-historical approach to distributed cognition. In Salamon, G. Ed. *Distributed cognition: psychological and educational considerations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Colley, H., Hodkinson, P. & Malcom J. 2003. *Informality and formality in learning: a report for the Learning and Skills Research Centre*. University of Leeds: Learning and Skills Research Centre.
- Collins, D. 1994. Worker control. *South African Labour Bulletin*. 18 (3): 33-42.
- Collins, J. 2000. Bernstein, Bourdieu and the New Literacy Studies. *Linguistics and Education*. 11 (1): 65-78.
- Colucci, F. P. 1999. The relevance to psychology of Antonio Gramsci's ideas on activity and common sense. In Engeström, Y., Miettinen, R. & Punamak, R. Eds. *Perspectives on Activity Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cooper, L. 1985. Writing for a popular audience: ILRIG evaluation of trade union perspectives on popular education materials. Paper presented to Association of Sociologists of Southern Africa (ASSA) Conference, University of Cape Town.
- Cooper, L. 1986. Popular writing and the democratisation of knowledge: Review article of *Factory and Family*, Vukani Makhosikazi and Working Women. *Critical Arts: A Journal for Media Studies*, 4 (2): 65-89.
- Cooper, L. & Qotole, M. 1996. Research and development: Contextual analysis, Final Report, Cluster 8: Trade Unions. Education, training and development (ETD) Practitioners Project, May.
- Cooper, L. 1998a. From 'Rolling Mass Action' to RPL: the changing discourse of experience and learning in the South African labour movement. *Studies in Continuing Education*. 20 (2): 143 – 157.
- Cooper, L. 1998b. The Implications of the National Qualifications Framework for emancipatory education in South Africa. In CEPD/EPU-Wits. *Reconstruction, Development and the National Qualifications Framework*. Papers presented at a Conference held at the Elijah Barayi Memorial Training Centre, Johannesburg, 15-16 August 1997.
- Cooper, L., Andrews, S., Grossman, J. & Vally, S. 2002. "Schools of labour" and "labour's schools": worker education under apartheid. In Kallaway, P. Ed. *The History of Education Under Apartheid: 1948-1994*. New York: Peter Lang.
- COSATU. 1985. Inaugural Congress Resolutions.
- COSATU. 1986. *Education speeches by Cosatu office bearers*. Dalbridge: Cosatu.
- Coullie, J. L. 1999. DisLocating selves: Izibongo and narrative autobiography. In Brown, D. Ed. *Oral literature and performance in Southern Africa*. Oxford: James Curry.
- Crowther, J., Martin, I & Shaw, M. Eds. 1999. *Popular Education and Social Movements in Scotland Today*. NIACE: Leicester.

- Daniels, H. 1993. The individual and the organization. In Daniels, H. Ed. *Charting the agenda: education activity after Vygotsky*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Daniels, H. 2000. Pedagogy and learner identity: A Bernsteinian interpretation of a study of gender and learning. Paper presented at the 2nd International Basil Bernstein Symposium, Breakwater Lodge, University of Cape Town, Cape Town.
- Daniels, H. 2001. *Vygotsky and pedagogy*. London and New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Daniels, J. 2005. Subject position and discourse in activity theory. Paper presented to School of Education Seminar, University of Cape Town, 21 July.
- Davenport, T. & Prusack, L. 1998. *Working knowledge: how organizations manage what they know*. Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School Press.
- Davies, B. 1994. Durkheim and the sociology of education in Britain. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 15 (1): 3-25.
- Dispatch Online. 2002. 37 Strikers arrested in Q'Town. 16 July.
- DITSELA. 1997. Research report on the competencies of trade union educators. Prepared for Ditsela and ETDP by Funamna Mankaye, December. Unpublished.
- DITSELA. 1998. A trade union educational needs and capacity assessment: Report on the phase two regional survey. Draft 2, March. Unpublished.
- Durrheim, K. 1999. Research design. In Terre Blanche, M. & Durrheim, K. Eds. *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for the Social Sciences*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
- Eagleton, T. 1991. *Ideology: An introduction*. London & New York: Verso.
- Edwards, R. Usher, R. 2000. *Globalisation and pedagogy: Space, place and identity*. London, Routledge.
- Ellsworth, E. 1989. Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of Critical Pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review*. 59: 297-324.
- Engeström, Y. 1991a. *Expansive learning at work*. Occasional Paper, 1, Lifelong Learning Group, Institute of Education, University of London, London.
- Engeström, Y. 1991b. Non scolae sed vitae discimus: Toward overcoming the encapsulation of school learning. *Learning and instruction*. 1: 243-259.
- Engeström, Y. 1999. Innovative learning in work teams: Analyzing cycles of knowledge creation in practice. In Engeström, Y., Miettinen, R. & Punamaki, R. Eds. *Perspectives on activity theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Engeström, Y. 2002. Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research. Available: HTTP: <<http://lchc.ucsd.edu/MCA/Paper/Engestrom/expanding>> Accessed 27 August.
- Entwistle, H. 1979. *Antonio Gramsci: conservative schooling for radical politics*. London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Eyerman, R. & Jamison, A. 1991. *Social movements: a cognitive approach*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Farrel, L. 2000. Negotiating knowledge in the knowledge economy: workplace educators and the politics of codification. In conference proceedings: Working knowledges: producing learning at work conference, University of Technology Sydney, Sydney, 10-13 December: 147–154.
- Fenwick, T. 2001. Experiential learning: A theoretical critique from five perspectives. ERIC Information Series No 385. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education, Ohio State University. Available online: www.cete.org/acve/mp_fenwick_01.asp. Last accessed: 13-06-2005.
- Fenwick, T. J. 2003. Learning through experience: Troubling orthodoxies and intersecting questions. Unpublished manuscript. (Published in 2004 by Melbourne, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company).
- Field, J. 1988. Workers' education and the crisis of British trade unionism. In Lovett, T. Ed. *Radical approaches to adult education: A reader*. London: Routledge.
- Finger, M. 1989. New social movements and their implications for adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 40: 15-21.
- Foley, G. 1999. *Learning in social action: A contribution to understanding informal education*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Foley, G. 2001. Radical adult education and learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. 20 (1/2): 71-88.
- Fox, S. 2000. Communities of practice, Foucault and Actor-network theory. *Journal of Management Studies*. 37 (6): 853-867.
- Freire, P. 1970. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Trans. By Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Seabury Press.
- Freire, P. 1976. *Education: The practice of freedom*. London: Writers' and Readers' Publishing Co-operative.
- Freire, P. & Macedo, D.P. 1995. A dialogue: culture, language and race. *Harvard Educational Review*. 65, 3: 377-402.
- Friedman, S. 1987. *Building tomorrow, today – African workers in trade unions*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.
- Gardiner, M. E. 2000. *Critiques of everyday life*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Garrick, J. 1999. The dominant discourses of learning at work. In Boud, D. & Garrick, J. Eds. *Understanding learning at work*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Gee, J. 1990. *Sociolinguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourses*. Basingstoke and Bristol: The Falmer Press.
- Gibbons, M., Limoges, C., Nowotny, H., Schwartzman, S., Scott, P., & Trow, M. 1994. *The new production of knowledge*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

- Ginsberg, M. 1997. Trade union education: Its past and future role in the development of the South African labour movement. Masters Dissertation, Faculty of Arts, University of Witwatersrand.
- Glassman, M. 2001. Dewey and Vygotsky: Society, experience and inquiry in education practice. *Educational researcher*. May: 3-14.
- Gore, J. 1998. Transforming curriculum in action: On the limits and possibilities of power relations in pedagogy. Paper presented at the 10th World Congress of Comparative Education Societies, Cape Town, July.
- Gramsci, A. 1971. *Selections from prison notebooks*. Hoare, Q. & Nowell, G. Eds. and Trans. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Gray, A. 2003. *Research practice for cultural studies: ethnographic methods and lived culture*. London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Grossman, J. 1988. Report to ILRIG on dismissed workers research project. Unpublished.
- Grossman, J. 1994. Individualism and collectivism: issues in researching collective working-class experience. Paper presented at the Oral History Conference, New York, October.
- Grossman, J. 1995. "For our children tomorrow": workers in struggle in South Africa: 1973-1995. Unpublished.
- Grossman, J. 1999. Workers and knowledge. Paper presented to Researching Work and Learning Conference, Leeds, September.
- Guile, D. and Young, M. 1998a. The question of learning and learning organizations. Unpublished.
- Guile, D. and Young, M. 1998b. Beyond the institution of apprenticeship: Towards a social theory of learning as the production of knowledge. Paper presented at EU COST Programme workshop, Helsinki, 4 May.
- Gunner, L. 1999. Remaking the warrior? The role of orality in the liberation struggle and in post-apartheid South Africa. In Brown, D. Ed. *Oral literature and performance in Southern Africa*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. 1983. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London and New York: Tavistock Publications.
- Harding, N. 1983. *Lenin's political thought, Volume 1: Theory and practice in the democratic revolution*. London & Basingstoke: The MacMillan Press Ltd.
- Harding, S. 1991. *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women's lives*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Harris, J.A. 2004. The hidden curriculum of the Recognition of Prior Learning: a case study. PhD. Thesis, Open University.
- Hart, M.V. 1992. *Working and educating for life: feminist and international perspectives on adult education*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Hasan, R. 2002. Semiotic mediation, language and society: Three exotripic theories – Vygotsky, Halliday and Bernstein. Paper presented at the 2nd International Basil Bernstein Symposium, Breakwater Lodge, University of Cape Town.

- Hodkinson, H. & Hodkinson, P. 2003. Rescuing communities of practice from accusations of idealism: a case study of workplace learning for secondary school teachers in England. *Proceedings of Experiential; Community; Workbased: Researching Learning Outside the Academy conference*. Glasgow, 27-29th June: 177-188.
- Hofmeyr, I. 1993. *"We spend our years as a tale that is told." Oral historical narrative in a South African chiefdom*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.
- Holford, J. 1995. Why social movements matter: Adult education theory, cognitive praxis, and the creation of knowledge. *Adult Education Quarterly*. 45 (2), Winter: 95-111.
- Hollway, W. & Jefferson, T. 2002. *Doing qualitative research differently: Free association, narrative and the interview method*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Holst, J.D. 1999. The affinities of Lenin and Gramsci: implications for radical adult education theory and practice. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. 18 (5): 407- 421.
- HSRC. 1991. Informal, formal and non-formal education. In Millar, C., Raynham, S-A. & Schaffer, A. Eds. *Breaking the formal frame: Readings in South African education in the eighties*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- ILRIG. 2000. Survey of municipal workers in the CMA. Paper presented to the Unicity Commission by the International Labour Resource and Information Group in Partnership with the Municipal Services Project, 30 May.
- Inghilleri, M. 2002. Britton and Bernstein on Vygotsky: Divergent views on mind and language in the pedagogy context. *Pedagogy, culture and society*. 10 (3): 467-482.
- Jackson, T. & Parr, C. 1981. Book review: The influence of Gramsci on adult education. *Convergence*. 14 (3): 81-86.
- Jordi, R. 1991. A paper on the role of service organizations in South Africa today presented by ILRIG to a CRIC-hosted discussion. Unpublished.
- Kallaway, P. Ed. 2002. *The history of education under apartheid: 1948 – 1994. The doors of learning and culture shall be opened*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Kane, L. 2001. *Popular education and social change in Latin America*. London. Latin America Bureau.
- Keet, D. 1992. Shop stewards and worker control. *South African Labour Bulletin*. 16 (5): 29-38.
- Kilgore, D. W. 1999. Understanding learning in social movements: a theory of collective learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. 18 (3): 191-202.
- Kolb, D. 1984. *Experiential Learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kress, G. 2000. Multimodality. In Cope, C. & Kalantzis, M. Eds. *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*. London and New York: New London Group, Routledge.
- Kromberg, S. 1993. A study of workers' poetry in Natal. Masters Thesis. University of the Witwatersrand.

- Lambert, T. & Webster, E. 1988. The re-emergence of political unionism in contemporary South Africa? In Cobbett, W. and Cohen, R. Eds. *Popular struggles in South Africa*. London: Review of African Political Economy in association with James Currey.
- Lave, J. 1996. Teaching, as learning, in practice. *Mind, culture and activity*. 3 (3): 149-164.
- Lave, J. 1998. *Cognition in practice: Mind, mathematics and culture in everyday life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. 1991. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- London, S.H., Tarr, E.R. and Wilson J.F. Eds. 1990. *The Re-education of the American Working Class*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Lovett, T. Ed. 1988. *Radical Approaches to Adult Education: A Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Lowry, D. 1999. *20 Years in the labour movement: The Urban Training Project and change in South Africa: 1971 – 1991*. Wadmore Publishing: Johannesburg.
- MacIntyre, S. 1980. *A proletarian science: Marxism in Britain: 1917 – 1933*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacShane, D., Plaut, M. and Ward, D. 1984. *Power! Black workers, their unions and the struggle for freedom in South Africa*. Nottingham: Spokesman.
- Makhoba, M. 1984. *The Sun Shall Rise for the Workers, Ilanga Lizophumela Abasebenzi*. Ravan Press: Johannesburg.
- Maree, J. 1984. The Institute for Industrial Education and workers education. *South African Labour Bulletin*. 9 (8): 77-91.
- Maree, J. 1985. Democracy and Oligarchy in South Africa's independent trade unions. PhD Thesis, Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- Maree, J. Ed. 1987. *The Independent trade unions: 1974 – 1984. Ten years of the South African Labour Bulletin*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.
- Marsick, V. & Watkins, K. 1999. Envisioning new organizations for learning. In Boud, D. and Garrick, J. Eds. *Understanding learning at work*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Martin, I. 1999. Introductory essay. In Crowther, J., Martin, I. & Shaw, M. Eds. *Popular Education and Social Movements in Scotland Today*. Leicester: NIACE.
- Marx, K. 1859/1968. Preface to a contribution to the critique of political economy. *Marx and Engels Selected Works*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- McCormick, K. 2002. Code-switching, mixing and convergence in Cape Town. In Mesthrie, R. Ed. *Language in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McDonald D. & Smith, L. 2000. *Privatizing Cape Town: Service Delivery and Policy Reforms since 1996*. Municipal Services Project Occasional Papers Series No 7, February.

- McEwan, M.J. & Malan, L. 1996. 'We are waiting/this is our home': literacy and the search for resources in the rural Eastern Cape. In Prinsloo, M. & Breier, M. Eds. *The social uses of literacy: theory and practice in contemporary South Africa*. Johannesburg: SACHED Books and John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- McHoul A & Grace W. 1993. *A Foucault primer: Discourse, power and the subject*. New York: New York University Press.
- Melluci, A. (1988). Social Movements and the democratisation of everyday life. In Keane, J. *Civil society and the state: new European perspectives*. New York: Verso.
- Mezirow, J. 1991. *Transformative dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Fransisco: Jossy-Bass.
- Michelson, E. 1996a. Usual suspects: Experience, reflection and the engendering of knowledge. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. 15: 438-353.
- Michelson, E. 1996b. Beyond Galileo's telescope: situated knowledge and the assessment of experiential learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*. 46 (4): 185-196.
- Michelson, E. 1998. Re-membering: The return of the body to experiential learning. *Studies in Continuing Education*. 20 (2): 217-233.
- Michelson, E. 1999. Carnival, paranoia and experiential learning. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, October: 140-154.
- Millar, C. 1983. Educational case studies: an introduction to a research perspective. In Research Methods for Higher Degrees, Faculty of Education, University of Cape Town: 115-123.
- Mink, L. 1987. Narrative form as a cognitive instrument. In Fary, B., Golob, E. and Vann, R. Eds. *Historical understanding*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Mojab, S. & Gorman, R. 2001. The struggle over lifelong learning: A Marxist-Feminist analysis. Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Adult Education Research Conference, North Carolina State University, May 24-26.
- Moll, I. 2002. Clarifying constructivism in a context of curriculum change. *Journal of Education*. 27: 5-32.
- Moore, R. & Muller, J. 2002. Growth of knowledge and the discursive gap. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 23, 4: 627-637.
- Morris, P. Ed. 1994. *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Volshinov*. London, New York, Sydney and Auckland: Arnold Publishers.
- Moss, G. 2000. Informal literacies and pedagogic discourse. *Linguistics and Education*. 11 (1): 47-64.
- Mulcahy, D. 2000. Training for new times: changing relations of competence, learning and innovation. *Studies in Continuing Education*. 21 (2): 217-238.
- Muller, J. 2000a. *Reclaiming Knowledge: Social Theory, Curriculum and Education Policy*. London and New York: Routledge Falmer.

- Muller, J. 2000b. What knowledge is of most worth for the millennial citizen? In Kraak, A. Ed. *Changing modes: New knowledge production and its implications for higher education in South Africa*. Pretoria: HSRC.
- Muller, J. & Taylor, N. 1993. The gilded calabash: Curriculum and everyday life. Paper presented at Kenton-at-Olwandle Conference, University of Natal, Durban.
- Nekhwevha, F. 2002. The influence of Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of Knowing" on the South African education struggle in the 1970s and 1980s. In Kallaway, P. Ed: *The History of Education Under Apartheid: 1948-1994*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Newman, M. 1993. *The third contract: Theory and practice in trade union training*. Sydney: Stewart Victor Publishing.
- Newman, M. 1994. *Defining the enemy: adult education in social action*. Sydney: Stewart Victor Publishing.
- Newman, M. 1999. *Maeler's regard: images of adult learning*. Sydney: Stewart Victor Publishing.
- Nonaka, I. & Nishiguchi, T. Eds. 2001. *Knowledge emergence: Social, technological and evolutionary dimensions of knowledge creation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nooteboom, B. 1999. Innovation, learning and industrial organisation. *Cambridge Journal of Economics*. 23: 127-150.
- Open University. 1993. *Principles of social and educational research, Unit 17/18: Analysis of unstructured data*. Milton Keynes: Open University.
- Pape, J. 2002. Down with missionaries and objective academics: some thoughts on political education for unions. Paper presented to 1998 DITSELA Trade union educators' conference. Published in *Worker Education: A Guide for Trade Unions*. Cape Town: ILRIG.
- Phillips, A. & Putnam, T. 1980. Education for emancipation: the movement for independent working class education, 1908 – 1928. *Capital and Class*. 10: 18-42.
- Portelli, A. 1991. *The death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories: form and meaning in oral history*. New York: State University of New York.
- Prinsloo, M. & Breier, M. Eds. 1996. *The social uses of literacy: theory and practice in contemporary South Africa*. Johannesburg: SACHED Books and John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Qabula, A.T. 1989. *A Working Life, Cruel Beyond Belief*. Durban, NUMSA.
- Richards, L. 2000. *Using NVivo in Qualitative Research*. Victoria: QSR International Pty Ltd.
- Rogoff, B. 1984. Observing sociocultural activity on three planes: Participatory appropriation, guided participation, and apprenticeship. In Rogoff, B. & Lave, J. Eds. *Everyday cognition: Its development in social context*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rudin, J. 1996. Ambivalent identities – colour and class in the Cape Town Municipal Workers' Association. PhD Thesis, University of Warwick.

- Rutherford, J. 1990. The third space: interview with Homi Bhabha. In Rutherford, J. Ed. *Identity, community culture, difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Sadovnik, A. R. 1995. Basil Bernstein's theory of pedagogic practice: A structuralist approach. In Sadovnik, A.R. Ed. *Knowledge and pedagogy: The sociology of Basil Bernstein*. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- SAMWU. 1996. 2nd Draft of a discussion document: towards consolidating SAMWU's education project.
- SAMWU. 1997. SAMWU Workers News: 10th Anniversary edition. November.
- SAMWU. 1998. Understanding SAMWU. Module 1: Foundation course for SAMWU shopstewards.
- SAMWU. 2001. SAMWU Cape Metro Branch: Executive Committee Meeting. 21 June 2001, Athlone.
- SAMWU. 2002a. Ultra Left? Who or what are they? 25 October.
- SAMWU. 2002b. Living Wage Circular No 1, from SAMWU GS to Provinces, 29 May.
- SAMWU. 2002c. Living Wage Campaign: Circular No 2, 6 June.
- SAMWU. 2002d. Managing the strike and strike rules.
- SAMWU. 2002f. Communication from Provincial Secretary W.Cape to SAMWU General Secretary. 26 June.
- SAMWU. 2002g. Western Cape: PEO report to education and training committee meeting. March.
- SAMWU. 2002/03. SAMWU Political Education Programme: 2002/03 Political education book.
- SAMWU. 2003a. SAMWU 7th National Congress, Book 5: Organisational renewal plan.
- SAMWU. 2003b. Report on SAMWU's efforts to implement organisational review and renewal. Report to Cosatu. March 2003.
- SAMWU. 2003c. Samwu Workers News. September.
- SAMWU. 2003d. SAMWU Foundation Shopsteward Training: Workshop resource package: Modules 1 – 3.
- SAMWU. 2004a. SAMWU Collective Bargaining Manual for Shopstewards: Module 4.
- SAMWU. 2004b. Local Government and Workplace Restructuring Manual: Module 5.
- SAMWU. n.d. Draft history of the first ten years of SAMWU.
- Schön, D.A. 1983. *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.
- Scribner, S. 1997. *Mind and social practice: Selected writings of Sylvia Scribner*. Tobach, E. et al. Eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Seftel, L. 1983. Worker education projects in the seventies. BA Honours Thesis, University of Witwatersrand.
- Senge, P. 1990. *The fifth discipline*. London: Century.

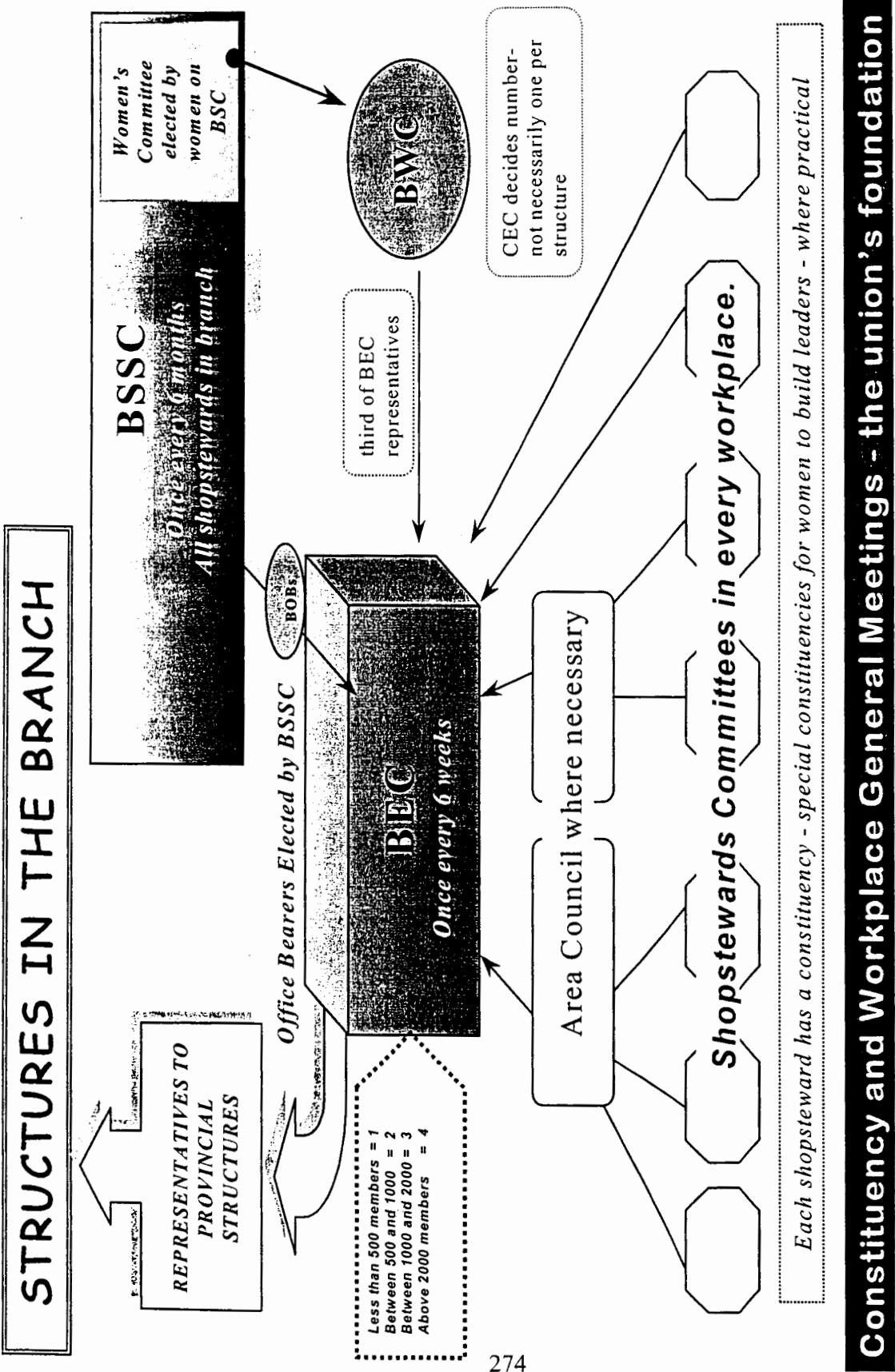
- Simon, B. Ed. 1990. *The Search for Enlightenment*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Simon, R. 1982. *Gramsci's political thought: An introduction*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Sitas, A. 1984. African worker responses on the East Rand to changes in South Africa's metalworkers, 1960-1980s. PhD Thesis, University of Witwatersrand.
- Sitas, A. 1986. Culture and production: The contradictions of working class theatre in South Africa. *Africa Perspective*. 1 (1 & 2): 84-10.
- Sitas, A. 1990. The voice and gesture in South Africa's revolution: A study of worker gatherings and performance-genres in Natal. Paper presented at Wits History Workshop, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 6-10 February.
- Slabbert, S. & Finlayson, R. 2002. Code-switching in South African townships. In Mesthrie, R. Ed. *Language in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sole, K. 1984. Black literature and performance: Some notes on class and populism. *South African Labour Bulletin*. 9 (8): 54-76.
- Soudien, C. 2002. Creolisation, education and identity. *Southern African Review of Education, with Education for Production*. 8: 5-14.
- South African Labour Bulletin. 1984. The Fosatu Education Workshop and worker education. Interview with Alec Erwin, National Education Officer of Fosatu. *South African Labour Bulletin*. 9 (8): 116-120.
- Spencer, B. 1995. Old and new social movements as learning sites: Greening labor unions and unionizing the Greens. *Adult Education Quarterly*. 46 (1): 31-42.
- Stein, P. 2003. Rights, representation and resources: multimodal communication in South African classrooms. D.Phil. Thesis. Institute of Education, University of London.
- Stone, G L. 2002. The lexicon and sociolinguistic codes of the working-class Afrikaans-speaking Cape Peninsula coloured community. In Mesthrie, R. Ed. *Language in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. 1998. *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, London & New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Sunday Times. 2002. SALGA advertisement. 7 July.
- Sunday Independent. 2002a. Striker has her pension in mind. 7 July.
- Sunday Independent. 2002b. SAMWU says it's ready to settle. 7 July.
- Szucs, I. n.d. 'Each one, teach one': A preliminary account of non-formal education programmes in Durban, 1935 - 1955. Unpublished.
- Terre Blanche, M. & Kelly, K. 1999. Interpretive methods. In Terre Blanche, M. & Durrheim, K. Eds. *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for the Social Sciences*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

- Terre Blanche, M. and Durrheim, K. 1999. Social constructionist methods. In Terre Blanche, M. and Durrheim, K. Eds. *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for the Social Sciences*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
- The Citizen. 2002. City truck torched. 5 July.
- Tisdell, E.J. 1993. Interlocking systems of power, privilege, and oppression in adult higher education classes. *Adult Education Quarterly*. 43 (4): 203–226.
- Usher, R. 1992. Experience in adult education: A post-modern critique. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*. 26 (2): 201–214.
- Usher, R. 1996a. A critique of the neglected epistemological assumptions of educational research. In Scott, D. & Usher, R. Eds. *Understanding educational research*. London: Routledge.
- Usher, R. Edwards, R. 1995. Confessing all? A “postmodern guide” to the guidance and counseling of adult learners. *Studies in the Education of Adults*. 20 (1): 9–23.
- Usher, R., Bryant, I. & Johnston, R. 1997. *Adult Education and the postmodern challenge: Learning beyond the limits*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Usher, R. & Solomon, N. 1999. Experiential learning and the shaping of subjectivity in the workplace. *Studies in the Education of Adults*. 31, 2: 155–163.
- Vally, S. 1994. Worker Education in South Africa: Form and Context: 1973 – 1993. Masters Dissertation, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
- Von Holdt, K. 2003. *Transition from below: forging trade unionism and workplace change in South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.
- Volsinov, V. N. 1929/1994. Marxism and the philosophy of language. In Morris, P. Ed. *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Volshinov*. London, New York, Sydney and Auckland: Arnold Publishers.
- von Kotze, A. 1984. Workshop plays as worker education. *South African Labour Bulletin*. 9, 8: 92 –111.
- Vygotsky, L.S. 1978. *Mind in society. The development of higher psychological processes*. Cole, M., John-Steiner, V., Scribner, S. & Souberman, E. Eds. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.
- Walters, S. 1989. Education for democratic participation: An analysis of self-education strategies within certain community organisations in Cape Town in the 1980s. Cape Town: Centre for Adult and Continuing Education CACE, University of Western Cape.
- Walters, S. 1998. Informal and nonformal education. In Stromquist, N.P & Monkman, K. Eds. *Women in the Third World – an encyclopaedia of contemporary issues*. New York: Garland Publishers.
- Weiler, K. 1996. Freire and a feminist pedagogy of difference. In Edwards, R., Hanson, A. & Raggatt, P. Eds. *Adult learners, education and training 1: Boundaries of adult learning*. London & New York: Routledge in association with The Open University.

- Welton, M. 1987a. Introduction. In Welton, M. Ed. *Knowledge for the people: The struggle for adult learning in English-speaking Canada, 1828-1973*. Toronto: OISE Press.
- Welton, M. 1987b. Dangerous Knowledge: Canadian workers' education in the decades of discord. In Welton, M. Ed. *Knowledge for the people: The struggle for adult learning in English-speaking Canada, 1828-1973*. Toronto: OISE Press.
- Welton, M. 1991. Dangerous knowledge: Canadian workers' education in the decades of discord. *Studies in the Education of Adults*. 23 (1): 24-40.
- Welton, M. 1993. Social Revolutionary Learning: The New Social Movements as Learning Sites. *Adult Education Quarterly*. 43 (3): 152-164.
- Welton, M. 1995. In defense of the lifeworld: a Habermasian approach to adult learning. In Welton, M. Ed. *In defense of the lifeworld: critical perspectives on adult learning*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Wenger, E. 1998. *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wertsch, J. V. 1985. Introduction. In Wertsch, J.V. Ed. *Culture, communication and cognition: Vygotskian perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wertsch, J. V. 1991. *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wertsch, J. V. & Smolka, A. L. B. 1993. Continuing the dialogue: Vygotsky, Bakhtin, and Lotman. In Daniels, J. Ed. *Charting the agenda: Education activity after Vygotsky*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Wildemeersch, D. 1992. Ambiguities of experiential learning and critical pedagogy. In Wildemeersch, D. & Jansen, J. Eds. *Adult education, experiential learning and social change: The postmodern challenge*. Driebergen: VTA Groep.
- Williams, G. A. 1975. *Proletarian order: Antonio Gramsci, factory councils and the origins of Italian Communism, 1911 - 1921*. London: Pluto Press.
- Young, M. 2002. Durkheim, Vygotsky and the curriculum. Paper presented at 5th Congress of the international society for Cultural Research and Activity Theory, 18-22 June. Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam.
- Young, R. 1990. *White mythologies: writing history and the West*. London & New York: Routledge.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Diagram of branch structures



Appendix 2: Letter to General Secretary requesting access

12 Malleson Road
Mowbray
Cape
7700

31 March 2001
The General Secretary
SAMWU 49
PO Box
Athlone

Dear Comrade

Request for permission to conduct research within SAMWU

I have recently registered for my PhD research at the University of Cape Town (where I am employed). The title of my dissertation is: "Change and continuity in workers' experiences of learning and knowledge production within the South African trade union movement". I am writing to request permission to focus on SAMWU as a case study within this research.

I have been involved in trade union education for a long time, working in ILRIG from 1983 to 1992. During the past few years, I have been involved in the training of trade union educators, first through the UCT Spring Schools and COSATU courses, and more recently I have coordinated and run the Ditsela Advanced Course for Trade Union Educators. I have always been aware of the fact that education within the union context does not only happen within structured programmes of education, but also during the course of the day-to-day organisational life of the union:- in meetings, policy debates, campaigns, and collective action such as strikes. However, there is little or no systematic information and analysis of how such informal education and learning happens within the union, nor how it links to education carried out in structured programmes. It is this that I would like to focus on in my research.

Ideally, what I would like to do is to select 2 or 3 local shopsteward committees within the Cape Town Metro branch, and to study their workings in some detail over a period of time. I am seeking permission to attend meetings of these structures over a 6 month period, to interview selected members of these structures (at times agreeable to them), and if possible, to follow some members of these committees into other structures/workshops in which they might be involved.

If the union, is willing to grant me such permission, I would be very happy to be party to a written agreement which spells out my accountability to the union, the groundrules that should govern my role as researcher/observer in meetings of structures of the union, and how I should share and make available to the union the information that I gather, and the analyses which I make.

I hope and believe that this research will actually be of some use and value to SAMWU, and the labour movement more generally. In particular, I hope it will help educators outside of the unions (eg within the university context) to better appreciate and value the knowledge which ordinary workers and worker leaders produce and share in their organisations and in their struggles. For trade union educators, I hope it might help them to know how to build stronger links between their more structured education programmes, and the informal learning and education that goes on in the daily experiences of union members.

I would be happy to provide you with any further information that you might need regarding my research project.

Yours in solidarity

Linda Cooper

Tel: 650 3999

Fax: 650 5405

e-mail: cooperl@humanities.uct.ac.za

Appendix 3: Events observed

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS OBSERVED:

1. Introductory shop-steward training workshop – Athlone offices (27/2/01)
2. Tygerberg Area Shop-steward Council (12/6/01)
3. Cape Metro Council Area Shop-steward Council – Athlone (14/6/01)
4. BEC – Athlone (21/6/01)
5. South Peninsula Area Shop-steward Council – Muizenberg (26/6/01)
6. Research skills workshop – Muizenberg (31/7/01)
7. Depot interview (Kendall Road) – Construction: (4/9/01)
8. Depot interview (Kendall Road) – Meter Readers (10/09/01)
9. Depot interview (Kendall Road) – Meter cover lifters (19/09/01)
10. Provincial Educators Forum meeting – Seapoint (11 – 12/ 4 /02)
11. National Collective Bargaining Workshop for organisers – Seapoint (13 – 15/5/02)
12. March on first day of the strike – central Cape Town: (2/7/02)
13. Strike Assessment meeting: Athlone offices (4/7/02)
14. At union offices on 9th day of the strike (10/7/02)
15. Tygerberg Area Shop-steward Council: strike assessment – Bellville (6/8/02)
16. Branch Workshop on ‘Ultraleft’ – Athlone offices (12/02/03)

EVENTS OBSERVED: BY “SETTING”

Workshops:

1. Introductory shop-steward training workshop – Athlone offices (27/2/01)

2. Depot interview (Kendall Road) – Construction: (4/9/01)
3. Depot interview (Kendall Road) – Meter Readers (10/09/01)
4. Depot interview (Kendall Road) – Meter cover lifters (19/09/01)
5. National Collective Bargaining Workshop for organisers – Seapoint (13 – 15/5/02)
6. Branch Workshop on ‘Ultraleft’ – Athlone offices (12/02/03)

Meetings:

1. Tygerberg Area Shop-steward Council (12/6/01)
2. Cape Metro Council Area Shop-steward Council – Athlone (14/6/01)
3. BEC – Athlone (21/6/01)
4. South Peninsula Area Shop-steward Council – Muizenberg (26/6/01)
5. Provincial educators forum Meeting – Seapoint (11 – 12/ 4 /02)

Strike

1. March on first day of the strike – central Cape Town: (2/7/02)
2. Strike Assessment meeting: Athlone offices (4/7/02)
3. At union offices on 9th day of the strike (10/7/02)
4. Tygerberg BSSC: strike assessment – Bellville (6/8/02)

Appendix 4: Research report to Cape Town branch of SAMWU

Some tentative findings from research on 'education and learning' within the Cape Metro Branch of SAMWU

Linda Cooper: Adult Education UCT

Introduction

Late in 2000, I approached the Head Office and the Cape Metro Branch of SAMWU to request permission to make a study of the processes of education and learning that take place in different sites within the union – not only in workshops, but also in meetings of constitutional structures, and other day-to-day union activities. I received permission to do so, and as a result, attended numerous meetings and workshops in 2001 and 2002.

I attended 9 union workshops/meetings in 2001, and 3 in 2002. These were:

1. Basic Shop-Steward Training workshop (27/2/01)
2. Tygerberg Area Shop-steward Council (12/6/01)
3. Cape Metro Council Area Shop-steward Council – Athlone (14/6/01)
4. BEC – Athlone (21/6/01)
5. South Peninsula Area Shop-steward Council – Muizenberg (26/6/01)
6. Research skills workshop – Muizenberg (31/7/01)
7. Depot interview (Kendall Road) – Construction: (4/9/01)
8. Depot interview (Kendall Road) – Meter Readers (10/09/01)
9. Depot interview (Kendall Road) – Meter cover lifters (19/09/01)
10. Provincial Educators Forum – Seapoint (11 – 12/ 4 /02)
11. Collecting Bargaining/National organisers Forum (13/5/02)
12. Tygerberg SSC (6/8/02)

I also attended a number of marches and meetings of full-time shop-stewards, organisers and office-bearers during the national strike of July 2002. I was asked by Head Office staff to assist with doing some interviews around workers' experiences of the strike, but thus far, I have only managed to do one such interview. I interviewed workers at the Wynberg Cleansing Depot on 26/02/03.

I took detailed notes during each of these union events that I observed, and I am currently working through them to extract some key themes and questions. What follows is an outline of the themes and issues that I have identified thus far. I would be extremely grateful for critical comment and feedback from members of the branch on the observations and impressions which I put forward in this report.

My report will first focus on those events which were part of the union's education programme – in other words, workshops. I will try to draw out some of the key features of union education, and make some comments on what I have

perceived to be “best practice” in this context. I will then go on to look at meetings as places where a great deal of learning takes place, even though meetings are not seen *mainly* as educational events. Once again, I will try to identify some of the key ways in which learning takes place in this context, and also identify some possible “blockages to learning” which I observed. Finally, I will make a report on the strike *as an educative and learning process*. I will argue that learning happens in the context of mass action also, but in very specific ways. Those things that are learnt during a strike – if identified and drawn upon – could provide a valuable resource for future educational programmes.

WORKSHOPS

SAMWU’s Foundation Shop-Steward Training (FSST) focuses on equipping shop-steward with knowledge about the union, their role as shop-stewards, and aspects of labour law, as well as providing skills to carry out their duties. However, it struck me while observing the FSST that Shop-steward training is not just about teaching skills and knowledge – it is also about teaching a *role*. A role involves not only skills, but also values, emotions, ways of behaving and ways of communicating, and it is bound up with identity. A number of important points flow from this.

Firstly, the main task of the union educator (in terms of shop-steward training) is to transform the member’s “workplace identity” into a “unionist identity” – ie. to build a new identity. This process of constructing a new ‘unionist’ identity will have already started in the case of most newly-elected shop-stewards, but the educator needs to build on and strengthen this process. The new shop-steward needs not only to learn about the union or the law, but also to how to think, feel and speak like a shop-steward.

The most effective educators that I observed in the FSST are those who have had previous experience of *being* a shop-steward. They are able to ‘teach’ the role of the shop-steward by drawing on their experience, and by using *performance* – ie they act as a ‘*role-model*’, modelling a particular way of using language and body language, a particular sense of humour and outlook on the world etc. I observed in one session of the FSST programme an organiser/educator who strutted up and down, modelling not only the specific tasks of the shopsteward, but also a ‘way of walking’; a ‘way of talking’ – the entire body language and attitudes of the ideal shopsteward. He taught through “performance”.

This learning through ‘modelling’ does not only happen in the workshop: It also happens through participation of shop-stewards in union structures involving other more experienced shop-stewards, and through mentoring and coaching by more experienced shop-stewards and organisers. It is possible that a lot more use could be made of these processes of mentoring and coaching (that happen already, but very unevenly) as a *follow-up* to FSST.

It is also worthwhile remembering that “roles” are also very culture-specific (tied up with language and culture). The shop-steward roles that are so expertly modeled by some facilitators are often deeply embedded in a particular language/culture and sense of humour (eg. ‘Cape’ Afrikaans), and it is not necessarily easy for workers outside of this culture (eg. Xhosa-speaking workers) to feel fully part of these.

What also struck me in the course of the FSST is that most shop-stewards today play many different roles, and that they seem to experience some confusion between these different roles. Are they workers? Leaders of workers? Representatives of workers? 'Supervisors' of other workers? Are they members of the union? Or the 'boss' of the union? ("workers' control"). There is also some ambiguity in their relationship to the organisation: Are *they* the union? Or is the union *their* organisation? Is it working for them? Or neglecting them?

Some of this can be illustrated through some quotes of participants in FSST, when they were asked to identify: What are they main problems they face?

- "My probleem is my baas. Sy is 'n SAMWU lid (sy's 'n vrou); My tweede probleem is die union. (starting late) Die kommunikasie tussen die union en shop-stewards is nie wat dit was nie"
- There's a SAMWU member who is in a supervisory role over us. We didn't have a shop-steward to inform workers about SAMWU policy – the supervisor did this, and this confused the workers.

It is possible that these conflicts or contradictions of role and identity have been intensified over the past few years, with changes in the workplace, and in the composition of the union's membership and leadership. Sorting out these 'role conflicts' presents the union educator with a real challenge in terms of shop-steward training.

A lot of learning in workshops also takes place through interaction between participants. In small group discussion, participants compare their experiences, and come up with conclusions based on their common experiences. In other words, *experience* plays a crucial role in union education in two ways: not only does the educator/facilitator have to have a lot of union experience, but participants also construct new knowledge on the basis of their common experiences. Bringing in information from outside of people's experience is also important; however it seems to be most effective when new information or ideas are connected with – or is 'woven into' – the prior experiences of participants.

The last point I'd like to make about union education is that it is very *directive*: it aims to impart to union members a particular world view, ideology and set of values. (This is particularly noticeable for me coming from a university background, where lecturers are always expected to "present all points of view" and not to "take sides" too strongly....) Some union facilitators are very 'teacher-centred' in their approach to education (they lecture and give a lot of information). Others are very 'learner-centred' (they get participants involved, and allow them to be active in their own learning). But *whatever* the style of the educator, s/he is still very directive – guiding members into a particular ideology and politics. At the same time however, it is clear that union education is not simply about making propaganda. Unionists are deeply concerned with the question of the *validity* of the information/knowledge they are dealing with. The need to discover the 'truth' and to "get things right" is critical for the union to successfully pursue its goals. This was very clear to me, for example, when I observed the processes of depot-level research happening within the branch.

Union education is also quite '*disciplinary*' in nature: It must induct members into the collective rules of the organisation: The 'rules' of the union play both a disciplining role, but also an *empowering* role: members are being inducted into a union activist role that involves demanding new power relations – on the shop-

floor and in society more generally. Union members are also taught that they must exercise power over their union officials and leaders – including those that play educative roles. Thus we have a rather contradictory situation where the process of teaching/learning *both* demand that members subject themselves to the discipline of the union, *and* at the same time demand that they exert their own power.

MEETINGS

Union meetings are very educative in nature; this is necessary because unionists are continuously having to deal with situations of considerable complexity, and a world that is constantly in flux, and often changing rapidly. Meetings therefore play a critical role in information-sharing, developing *common* perspectives, and in strategising. There is also an explicit awareness within the union that 'capacity' has to be built and distributed widely because union leaders are often leaving or moving on, and others have to be ready to take their place.

Like in small group discussions in workshops, a lot of learning in the meeting context happens through a kind of 'learning cycle': Comrades discuss and compare experiences (this happens most noticeably in "report-backs"); the chair helps to draw out common issues and identify underlying patterns; participants then plan future action and strategies. Everyone is both 'educator' and 'learner' in the meeting context.

Some of the most skillful facilitators that I observed – often the chair of the meeting – played the following roles:

- Summarising and linking different people's points into one voice, but also extending a little beyond what members were saying;
- Giving a slightly different – often more 'politically clear' – perspective to what was said;
- Painting the larger picture, noting the broader significance of points made;
- Interpreting, analysing and synthesising;
- Probing and posing questions (rather than simply answering them);
- Pushing responsibility on to members to define the 'way forward'.

I have noticed that some unionists play a crucial role in learning processes within meetings, by virtue of their involvement in other forums:

- Older workers and very experienced shopstewards bring key glimpses of, and lessons from the past; they can identify patterns of continuity and change, and help to strategise;
- Comrades who are involved in policy structures, or important negotiating forums – as well as those who are involved in outside organisations (political, youth, community etc) – bring in critical information from these structures;
- Comrades with particular areas of intellectual expertise (eg. understanding of law, economics, politics and history) also provide important insights and understanding.

All these unionists play a key role in locating the issues around which the union is struggling within a broader context.

The union culture is a very “oral” culture. Comrades in the union generally prefer to communicate orally and face-to-face, rather than through writing. I have noted that there is usually a lot of written documents distributed at most meetings – minutes of other meetings, copies of correspondence; new legislation or policy documents, the union’s magazine, etc. etc. The distribution of important information is part of the democratic culture of the union. However it seems that most comrades do not read most of what they are given (this is a continuous complaint raised at many meetings). It is not quite clear why is this so. It could be that some comrades are not comfortable reading (heavy documents) in English, or it could just be the case that comrades *prefer* to communicate in oral form. Whatever the reason for a ‘non-reading’ culture in the union, it seems to me that it is quite difficult to change long-standing practices and habits. It might be better for the union to assume that most documents will *not* be read in detail by *most* shop-stewards, although they may be used for reference purposes from time to time.

What are some of the key features of the ‘oral’ culture in the union?

- In both meetings and workshops, communication often takes the form of ‘story-telling’, where comrades give a detailed account of something that happened or an experience they have had. ‘Story-telling’ is an important part of our common, oral culture, and it can act as a valuable educational tool. Comrades often point to some broader issues or draw some important lessons through their ‘story-telling’.
- The use of language is very important in the learning process: comrades in the Cape Metro branch do a lot of ‘code-switching’ (shifting between English & Afrikaans); this helps to *include* comrades; it allows the introduction of humour and the use of particular idioms or metaphors which hold powerful meaning. So the way in which language is used engages the *emotions and feelings* of comrades, and this provides motivation for learning.

It is worth noting though that both language and literacy can act not only to *include* but also to *exclude*. I noticed that almost all the documents (with the exception of some of the education manuals) are in English. Many of the documents distributed in meetings are dense and very long, and shop-stewards are expected to be able to recognise and deal with many different and complex types of documents (eg. besides the usual minutes and reports, there are also e-mails, letters from lawyers, edited policy documents etc). It was also clear on some occasions that some shop-stewards experienced difficulties in reading in English.

A few meetings that I observed were very rigorous about providing translation. But in many meetings there was little or no translation into Xhosa. In some cases this does not appear to be a problem, but in other cases it seemed that Xhosa-speaking comrades were not always finding it easy to follow. Also – language is embedded in culture. So Xhosa-speaking comrades might sometimes feel excluded simply because the language used is communicating a different sense of humour, a different set of cultural reference points, to their own.

THE STRIKE

Different kinds of learning take place in different sites/contexts within the union. During the strike it seemed to me that a very special form of learning takes place. Knowledge during the strike is really “knowledge in action”; it is knowledge

which is literally expressed ‘through the body’; the message of the strike was not only on the placards carried by the marchers or by those on the picket-line, but it was also embedded in the collective action itself.

On my visits to the union office, I was aware that extensive learning was taking place daily, but it seemed largely unconscious. I had written in my notes when I visited the office on the 9th day of the strike:

Everywhere there's a sense of action – togetherness – people running around, it looks chaotic but they seem to know what they're doing. They're in this together. A shared experience – so much can be left tacit (unsaid).

On the other hand, this tacit learning was complemented by moments of very self-conscious, critical reflection on experience. For example, at the strike assessment meeting I attended at end of the first week of the strike, there was a heated debate about how to account for the drop in support for the strike and lack of discipline amongst some shop-stewards. There was a lengthy process of sharing experiences, drawing lessons, and proposing new action, accompanied also by an awareness of the importance of learning from the experience of the strike. This is clearly illustrated in the following comments:

We didn't have a clear record of who came as shop-stewards and who didn't. We need to learn from these things.- we need to tighten up, spell out everyone's role, say exactly what's expected of each and everyone. That's what this morning taught me...

We all need to be committed, cooperate together. Some leadership was outside, while other workers inside were drunk. But we need to learn from our mistakes – because we are now new office bearers....

It would seem important that the union finds ways to document the many important lessons that comrades were able to draw during the strike, so that these – in turn – can provide guidance in the future.

It was also interesting to me how traditional lines of communication shifted during the strike. During meetings and workshops, much information is channeled from the ‘top down’ – from higher structures to lower structures. However, during the strike, the information seemed to flow more in the opposite direction. For example, I was aware that some of the union leadership were worried about the members’ preparedness or ability to embark on a large, lengthy strike. Members’ support for the strike, or the ability of many to maintain the strike for three weeks, therefore communicated something important to the leadership about workers’ preparedness to take action. It was also interesting to see how, in the struggle to get daily updates, the head office of the union was much of the time having to chase after workers, seeking information from *them*. The line of communication was therefore more from the ‘bottom upwards’.

There were also new lines of communications opening up *from the union outwards*. During the strike it was not only union members who engaged in learning; the strike was also educating the ‘public out there’. The strike was taking a message from the workers outwards to the media and into communities. This message was not only about the concrete problems facing workers and their demands, but also about the union's broader world-view and values.

Concluding comments

This is an interim research report, summarising some of my observations and impressions thus far. As I said earlier, I would be extremely grateful for critical

comment and feedback from members of the branch on the observations and impressions which I have put forward in this report. Unless my analysis of the processes of learning and education in the Cape Metro Branch of SAMWU makes sense, and rings true for the members of the branch, it will be of no value to this union, or to union educators more generally.

I would like to sincerely thank all those comrades who have facilitated access to the events on which this research is based, and who have given up their time to speak to me and answer questions. I would also like to add that this report is not intended to be an “outside evaluation” of the union. In other words, I do not intend to ‘judge’ whether what happens within the union (educationally) is right or wrong, good or bad. That is not my role or my job to do. What I hope I can do is to “hold up a mirror” for you to see with fresh eyes what you experience as union activists every day, so that you might better appreciate the strengths of the educational work that does go on, and also find ways in which to *make the most educational value* of the usual – and unusual – processes that take place within the union.

Linda Cooper

Adult Education – University of Cape Town

25 April 2003

Appendix 5: Interviews

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP INTERVIEWS:

1. Post-strike group interview: Workers of Wynberg Cleansing Depot, 26 February 2003
2. Focus group interview 1: National Train the trainer workshop: Ritz Plaza Hotel, Sea Point, 14 April 2003
3. FTSS Interview 1 & 2 (Joint interview): Athlone offices; 6 May 2003
4. FTSS Interview 3: Athlone Offices, 27 May 2003
5. Focus Group Interview 2 (Development, Finance and Corporate Administration SSC): Athlone offices: 3 June 2003
6. Focus Group Interview 3 (Water, Sanitation and Electricity SSC): Athlone offices: 4 June 2003
7. Focus Group Interview 4 (Open Spaces, Sport & Recreation SSC): Athlone offices: 4 June 2003
8. Focus Group Interview 5 (Community Services SSC): Athlone offices: 5 June 2003
9. Focus Group Interview 6 (Solid Waste SSC): Athlone offices: 5 June 2003
10. FTSS Interview 4 (Branch Chairperson) : Athlone offices: 8 September 2003
11. FTSS Interview 5: Athlone offices: 23 October 2003
12. FTSS Interview 6: Athlone offices: 26 October 2004.

Appendix 6: Interview schedule

Full time shop-stewards

Changes and Continuities as a Shop-steward over time

- When did you first get active within the union?
- When did you first get elected as a shop-steward?
- What did you see as your main role as shop-steward then?
- How similar or different is the role of shop-steward today? (Has your role as shop-steward changed over time?)
- How do you think members' expectations/involvement in the union has changed over time?
- How has the union – as a workers' organisation – changed from when you were first involved?
- How has union education changed (or not) over this period?

The strike

- What are your feelings now about the strike?
- What were the biggest problems you faced during the strike?
- What do you think were the biggest achievements of this strike?
- How did you bring past experiences into this strike? How similar or different was this strike from previous strikes you've been involved in?
- What, for you, were the key lessons to be drawn from this strike?

Community engagement

- What kinds of engagement/involvement do you have with outside community or civil society organisations?

- How did you get involved in this?
- Do you go there in a SAMWU capacity? Or if not, in what capacity?
- What do you think are the key contributions you bring to this organisation from your experiences in SAMWU?
- What do you think you bring from that outside involvement into your SAMWU work?

Thank you!

Linda

Appendix 7: 'Archival' interviews

Reference	Name & position	Date	Place
Interview "R"	Roger Ronnie – General Secretary, SAMWU.	Tuesday 14 th October, 1997	SAMWU Head Offices, Athlone
Interview "B"	Boss Nxu – 2 nd Vice President of SAMWU, and Cape Metro shop-steward.	Thursday 16 th October, 1997	SAMWU Western Cape offices, Cape Town
Interview "M"	Salie Manie – past Chairperson of CTMWA, and of the Cape Town branch of SAMWU; currently ANC member of parliament.	Thursday, 16 th October, 1997	Parliament, Cape Town
Interview "T"	Trevor Serfontein – past office bearer of the Cape Town branch of SAMWU, and later organiser for the branch.	Friday 17 th October, 1997	SAMWU Western Cape Offices, Cape Town
Interview "J"	John Erntzen, ex-General Secretary of CTMWA, and later of SAMWU.	Monday 3 rd November, 1997	Public Service Commission Offices, Cape Town

Appendix 8: Programme of foundation shop steward training

FSST PROGRAMME

Day one: Understanding SAMWU : module 1

9 – 9.30am Opening

- Introduction
- Expectations
- House rules
- Explanation of material
- Icebreaker

9.30 – 1pm What it means to be a shopsteward:

⇒ Why did you join a union?

Group work and report back: Activity sheet one

⇒ Trade unions in society and the role of trade unions (including the principles underlying trade unions)

Input

⇒ Day-to-day activities as a shopsteward:

Input and discussion:

Input from experienced shopsteward on working as a committee; day-to-day activities as a shopsteward; shopsteward duties (referring to constitution)

Important to make distinction between roles and duties of shopstewards and roles and duties of organisers

1 – 2pm LUNCH

2 – 4pm Who is SAMWU?

⇒ Workers control of the union:

Buzz groups:

- Why do we want our union to operate according to the principle of workers control?
- How should a union work so that its members control it?

⇒ The constitution: reflecting workers control

Input

- The constitutional structures
- How the Bargaining Council works
- The main campaigns of the union

⇒ SAMWU, COSATU and IMATU:

Activity:

Activity sheet 4 & 7: Half the groups do worksheet 4 and half do worksheet 7

Report-back and short summary input.

- Input should raise issues of alliance and link this to the local government elections.

4 – 5pm *Knowing your municipality (if there is time):*

Group work:

Make a poster of your municipality. It should show, in some way, the following information:

- What areas is covered by your municipality?
- Who lives in the different areas?
- What are the main problems the different communities experience?
- Who are the councillors?
- What kind of policy are the councillors making? How are decisions made? Is the community involved much?
- What is happening with regard to local government restructuring in your area?

Day two: Dealing with disciplinary hearings: module 2

9 – 10am *Summary*

⇒ **Summary of previous day's work**

10 – 10.45am *Dealing with grievances and disciplinary procedures:*

⇒ **What is your experience of disciplinary and grievance procedures?**

Buzz groups:

- Have you been involved in any disciplinary or grievance procedures, either with other people or alone?
- Comment on your experience: what was good and bad about what happened? What could have been improved? What areas do you need assistance on?

⇒ **When is it a grievance and when is it a disciplinary issue?**

Input

10.45 – 1pm *Disciplinary hearings*

⇒ **What happens in a disciplinary hearing?**

Video or role play by facilitators

After watching the video/role play, participants discuss what they have seen.

⇒ **Common reasons for discipline and preparing for disciplinary hearings**

Group work and report-backs:

Activity sheets: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

⇒ **The law and disciplinary action:**

Input

What does the LRA say about disciplinary action and dismissals?

1 – 2pm *LUNCH*

2 – 5pm *Putting what we've learnt into practice:*

Group work and report backs

- Activity sheets: 11, 12, 13, 15, 18

Day three: Dealing with grievances: module 3

9 – 11am	<i>Handling grievances:</i>
-----------------	------------------------------------

⇒ **Basics of handling grievances**

Input

Group work:

Activity sheets 2, 3, 4, 6

11 – 12pm	<i>Handling strikes</i>
------------------	--------------------------------

Input

12 – 1pm	<i>Evaluation of workshop</i>
-----------------	--------------------------------------

Filling in forms

Appendix 9: Activity 3a – Why join a union?

Activity 3a: Why join a trade union?

Aim:

- to develop an understanding of what a trade union is
- to look at the principles underlying a democratic union

Time allocation: 1 hour and 30 minutes

Material needed:

- Cardboard
- Khokis
- Presstick

Activity:

1. Ask each shopsteward to write down the reasons that they joined a trade union. Each reason should be written on a separate piece of cardboard. When they have finished, paste the reasons on the wall.
2. The facilitator will group the reasons together and lead some discussion on the different reasons that have been given.
3. Most of the reasons will relate to problems that workers have experienced in the workplace and their recognition of the need to unite together with workers facing the same or similar problems, in order to solve those problems. As individuals, workers are weak, but united together they become a much stronger force against the power of the employers.
4. In the plenary, ask shopstewards to brainstorm why workers are in a weak position relative to the employers? Why do the employers have the power in the workplace that they do?
5. You will get a range of responses. Through an input you need to consolidate these responses so that some of these key points emerge:
 - Employers own the means of production, while workers are dependent on a wage for survival.
 - Employers exploit workers in order to make a profit.
 - This is the basics of the system we call capitalism.
 - Under capitalism there is ongoing conflict between the different classes.
 - Workers, throughout the history of capitalism, have fought against their exploitation by uniting in trade unions.
 - Employers have used race and gender to reinforce class divisions. We can see this very clearly in South Africa.
 - Although local government is an organ of state, and is not a profit-driven body, the problems that confront municipal workers are very similar to the problems that confront private sector workers.
 - Why is this so? Because local government exists within a capitalist society and protects and reflects the interests of the dominant class in society – namely the bourgeoisie (owners of capital).

The attached information sheet gives some background/key points to raise. You can hand out this information sheet to shopstewards.

6. Ask participants to discuss in pairs:

INFORMATION SHEET

Understanding trade unions: a class analysis

To understand trade unions an understanding of class society is critical. The following notes are to assist towards that section of the Workshop that deals with issues of class and a more theoretical approach to the nature of trade unions and society.

CHANGE OVER TIME

What unions are, or have been, has varied over time and from country to country. There have been different forms of unions such as :

- Craft Unions
- General Unions
- Industrial Unions

Introducing workers to reading labour history is an important dimension of understanding what unions are and how they have evolved to serve workers interests (or not serve workers interest) at various times and in different countries.

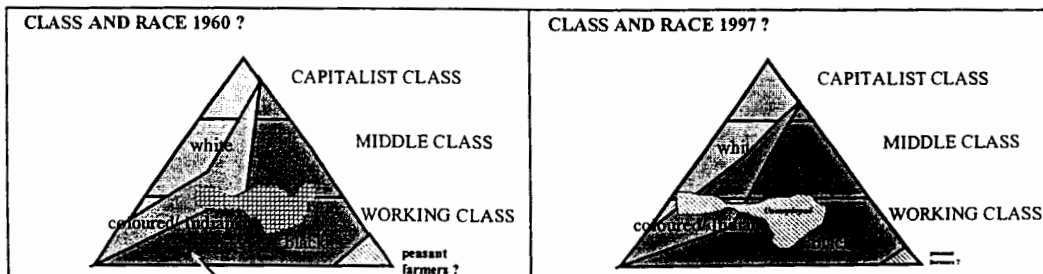
For example the growth of our unions and the move to centralised bargaining as well as national negotiations around macro-economic issues, has created problems in maintaining effective worker control. Workers need to think about change and continuity in what defines the union.

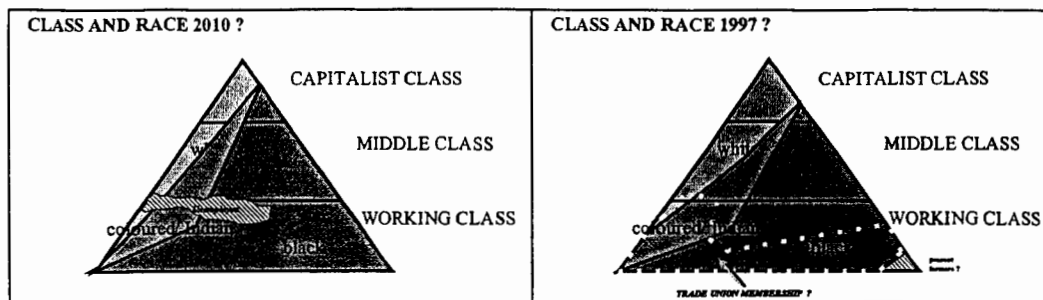
CLASS ANALYSIS

A key issue underlying trade unionism is the nature of class society. We live in a global economic system based on markets that distribute economic goods and services unequally. In which some accumulate wealth through the ownership of the means of production while others have to sell their labour power.

In Apartheid South Africa this class division was reinforced through the use of race and legislated racist controls to hold the majority of black (and coloured and Indian peoples) within the working class while on the other hand advancing the economic interest of the white minority. Now that apartheid legislation is removed these lines of race/class are slowly changing. The following diagrams provide a schematic representation of the changing relations of race and class - the proportions are not necessarily accurate.

Central to any exercise of this nature is for the group to give their assessment of how class and race intersect in each of the years.

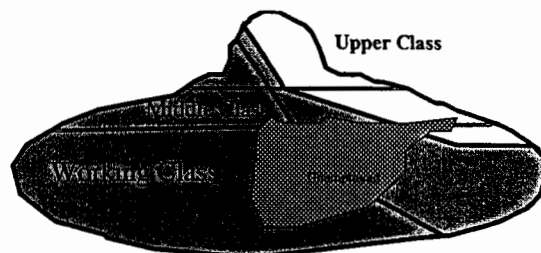




The diagrams also introduce other elements of political economy . For example the issue of "peasant farmers " and the extent to which such an independent class may or may not still have existed in 1960. The issue of "unemployment" and how it may or may not increase - of how on current international trends there are sections of the middle classes unemployed.

There are other *overlays* which could be included in such diagrams. Diagram 4 above asks: what proportions are members of trade unions in South Africa ? Another would be to examine these class forces in relation to Gender oppression.

You can use these as OHPs, or as a basis to draw your own diagram on a flip chart or white board. However a better practice may be to draw the basic "class triangle" and then get participants to indicate where they think the lines of race intersect. Another adaptation is to provide triangles on which individual or small groups draw in the class and race intersections - then comparing the results. You are not restricted to a triangle - perhaps the shape above is more accurate!



The nature of capitalist society and the way in which race, and gender, have been used in South Africa, and in other countries, to reinforce division within the working class is at the centre of an understanding of trade unions. As a union we stand for the attainment of socialism and against the capitalist system - this requires an understanding of the nature and forms of classes within the capitalist system.

Appendix 10: Programme of collective bargaining workshop

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WORKSHOP FOR ORGANISERS 13 th to 15 th MAY 2002					
DAY ONE					
TIME	TITLE	PLENARY	OBJECTIVES AND CONTENT	MATERIALS & HAND-OUTS	FACILITATOR OR INPUT
9H00 TO 9H30	INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Is a staff training Course. ➤ Will be used indirectly to assess further training needs. ➤ Will assess potential for a strike and plan out a strike. ➤ Will examine our state of organisation as the foundation for action. 		John Mawbey
9H30 TO 10H00	LEVELS AND ISSUES IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING	PLENARY INPUT VERY BRIEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Overview of levels from "Global" to Local ➤ What is or is not for local, divisional and central negotiation. ➤ Will discuss issues of negotiation versus consultation versus joint decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> SALGBC Local Labour Forum report. <input type="checkbox"/> Levels of Bargaining Agreement 	John Mawbey
10H30 TO 11H30	GROUP DISCUSSIONS :	GROUPS Groups will be cross provincial	Group 1: Group 2: Group 3: Group 4:	Discussion Sheets	John Mawbey
10H30 TO 11H00 TEA -COFFEE					
11H30 TO 12H00	PLENARY				

12H00 TO 13H00	WAGE NEGOTIATIONS 2002	INPUT AND DISCUSSION		Report	Dale Forbes
13H00 TO 14H00 LUNCH - LUNCH					
14H00 TO 15H00	REPORTS ON MADATING AND STATE OF MOBILISATION OF MEMBERS	3 GROUPS BY PROVINCES: <input type="checkbox"/> NP/NW <input type="checkbox"/> MP/GAU <input type="checkbox"/> FS/KZN/EC <input type="checkbox"/> WC/NC	Group 1:	Group 2:	John Mawbey
			Group 3:	Discussion Sheets.	
15H00 TO 15H30	IS A STRIKE A PROPOSITION?	PLENARY REPORT BACK	A discussion of strengths and weaknesses identified by Groups.		John Mawbey
15H30 TO 16H00 TEA -COFFEE					
16H00 TO 17H30	OPTIONS IN MULTI-YEAR BARGAINING		Essentially to look at what combinations tend to be proposed. What problems do arise? The productivity connection – and how is this measured.		Dale Forbes

DAY TWO					
9H00 TO 10H00	THE LAW OF STRIKES	PLENARY INPUT AND DISCUSSION	To go through all of the basics of the law of strikes. Secondary strikes, social strikes etc	Chapter 14: LRA Picketing COC.	Randal van Voore
10H00 TO 10H30	ASSESSING THE STATE OF MINIMUM SERVICE AGREEMENTS	PLENARY INPUT AND DISCUSSION			John Mawbey
10H30 TO 11H00 TEA-COFFEE - DURING GROUP					
11H00 TO 12H00	PREPARING FOR A STRIKE	GROUPS	Group 1: <input type="checkbox"/> Conducting a Ballot. <input type="checkbox"/> Check-list of preparatory steps	Group 2: <input type="checkbox"/> Picketing rules & approach <input type="checkbox"/> Draw up a list of strike rules – the do's and don'ts. Group 4: Media and Publicity What are the lines we must take to gain support or sympathy.	John Mawbey
			Group 3: Essential Service workers and the strike.		
12H00 TO 13H00	PREPARING FOR A STRIKE	PLENARY REPORT BACK AND DISCUSSION			John Mawbey
LUNCH 13H00 TO 14H00					

14H00 TO 15H00	ORGANISATIONAL RIGHTS AND MEMBERSHIP LOSE	GROUP DISCUSSION	Group 1	Group 2:		John Mawbey
			Group 3:	Group 4:		
15H00 TO 15H30		PLENARY REPORTS AND DISCUSSION	Objective – the questions will seek to focus on all possible causes. The session may well lead to "homework."			
TEA – COFFEE 15H30 TO 16H00						
16H00 TO 17H30	THE PROBLEMS OF SALGA	INPUT AND DISCUSSION				John Mawbey
DAY THREE						
9H00 TO 10H30	JOB EVALUATION	PLENARY INPUT AND DISCUSSION			<input type="checkbox"/> Draft Job Description Explanation	John Mawbey
TEA COFFEE ---- 10H30 TO 11H00						
11H00 TO 12H00	WHAT IS THE SOCIAL WAGE INCLUDING INPUT ON BIG	PLENARY INPUT AND DISCUSSION				Neil Coleman COSATU
12H00 TO 13H00	WINDING UP					John Mawbey